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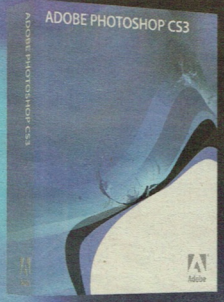

HUB The Computer Paper

October 2007 Volume 20 Number 10 Free

No New Wires
Powerline networking comes in to its own

Digital Photo Tutorial
The fall feast of colours

The big byte
New solutions for digital media storage

The ultimate office

Building the best home office

SOHO and software piracy

In the Lab
Online operating systems

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Contents

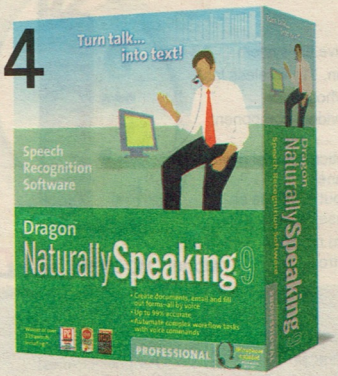
October 2007

12

20

28

34



8 Reader Letters
HUB: The Computer Paper readers have their say

9 News Briefs
The latest launches and newest news

14 The ergonomic office
Creating a healthy and usable workspace

20 The ultimate home office
What you need to thoroughly geek up your SOHO environment

26 No New Wires
HomePlug's continuing saga of computing anywhere

28 In the Lab: Online operating systems
A Window to Web 2.0

32 The fall feast of colours
Changing seasons means new photographic opportunities

34 Are we there yet?
Not quite. Tech innovations we'd like to see34

38 HP Blackbird 002
A dark horse arrives on the luxury PC scene

40 SOHO my AIO
Four hot all-in-ones for your busines

41 DV or Not DV
The benefits of digital video in getting your business point across

43 Mastering PowerPoint Masters
Creating powerful PowerPoint presentations

44 Game on!(line)
HUB: TCP's top five cures for the office doldrums

47 Advertiser index

48 Tech Training in Ontario
A tech-take on post-secondary and continuing education

50 Internet service provider locator

53 Toronto hosts trio of professional videogame tournaments
Playing for keeps at the World Cyber Games in Toronto

HUB: The Computer Paper
Volume 21: Number 10

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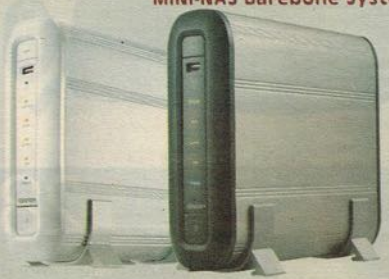
Model : TS-201, TS-209, TS-209 Pro.



Model : TS-100

Model : TS-101, TS-109, TS-109 Pro.

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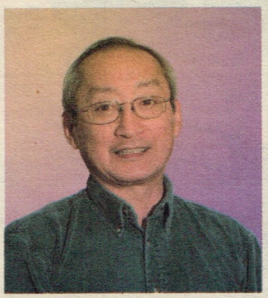

Home sweet work

A few years ago, I moved from working in an office tower in the metropolis to working from my home in a little city. It's somewhat humbling to realize that the magazine comes out like clockwork, month after month without me hovering around the office staff. And despite the fact that I generally don't like meetings, there are times when my not being in the thick of things, either for an internal meeting or to attend a media event, is a definite disadvantage. For many situations, nothing can replace a face-to-face tete-a-tete.

On the plus side – where do I begin. No commute, no gridlock – my gasoline fill up frequency has gone from once every three or four days to once every three or four weeks. Getting product loaners to review is slightly more inconvenient since I have to be my own shipper/receiver, but the courier companies have come to know me – the house in the middle of the block. The Internet doesn't know my bungalow from a glass tower, so the steady info stream about new products and developments in the tech industry continues unabated.

In fact, the availability of high-speed Internet and high-speed cellular datacomm has made location irrelevant to what a lot of people do to earn a living. Some companies have embraced the new technology, equipping certain parts of their workforce such as sales with multifunction devices to use at home and notebook computers to use anywhere. Others have implemented telework programmes, which allow some employees to work at home some of the time. And there's the legions of people who have chucked corporate life – or were chucked – and have started their own businesses at home.

I worked from home as a freelancer once before in the early 1990s. My state of the art road warrior setup consisted of a 10-pound 386 laptop computer and a five-pound Cantel "luggable" cell phone. A triumph in 1991 was filing a story from a campground in Victoria to the publisher's BBS site in Toronto using a special Radio Shack black box that allowed me to use the cell phone as a data modem. Yes, it was primitive and painful. And laughable, compared to what we can achieve today. The infrastructure is better, and the tools are better. Even my candy bar size Blackberry has more processing power, storage capacity and datacomm speed than that ancient technology.

So, what do you really need in the way of technology to earn a living from home in 2007? A computer? Most definitely. It might be intriguing to think that you could run your business from a Blackberry, but novelty can quickly turn to masochism, particularly if your work involves a lot of keyboarding. Like a computer, high-speed Internet access is an essential service for two reasons: so much business information is now available online plus so much business can now be conducted online.

A printer or multifunction? Maybe. But take a lesson from bigger companies and evaluate outsourcing versus in-house. For example, if you need a few printouts regularly, having your own printer at home is convenient, but there comes a point where it's more efficient to take the job to a copy centre. For instance, if you need 10 copies of a 50-page report, bound and with a cover, but perhaps only once a quarter, outsource it. If you need that volume once a week, it might be less expensive to buy the equipment.

I'm presently going through an experiment in this regard. Earlier this year I bought a colour laser printer and a binding system for one large job I was involved in. Calculating only the dollars that went out of my pocket, I saved some money compared to what the job would have cost at a print shop. There is a lot of additional work involved in being your own printer and bindery, however, and when you assign a dollar value to those activities, the equation becomes less straightforward. I also made an error in buying standard toner cartridges. High-yield cartridges for the printer cost about 15 percent more but offer at least double the page capacity, and this skewed the in-house vs. outsource comparison.

Still, now that the job is over, I have ready access to a laser printer with colour capability. This is proving to be quite a convenience. My home office is feeling more like a workplace office. However, I'm not sure that's entirely a good thing.

Enjoy the issue.
David Tanaka,
Editor

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HUB: The Computer Paper readers have their say

Generally we like to run readers letters that speak to both sides of an issue in as close to an accurate ratio as possible. We didn't get any negative comments about our format and name change. Instead, what we received was an overwhelming affirmation that it is the right move, perhaps too long in coming. We didn't even get any complaints about the newsprint coming off on your fingers. Perhaps next month?

Letter of the Month:

Former Editor and Publisher of The Computer Paper has his say:

It is funny that just the other morning, a friend asked me "whatever happened to The Computer Paper?"
I told her about the name change to HUB: Digital Living and how I hadn't really thought was such a great idea at the time. I understood about wanting to broaden the scope to include more tech gadgets, but it always seemed possible to do that under the heading The Computer Paper.
Then I mentioned to my friend the format change down to 8 1/2 x 11" size and how I thought that had been a very bad idea. Sure the smaller size was easier to handle but the information content seemed to go way down. There was just so much less space to say anything. If The Computer Paper was about anything, it was about information, lots of it.
A few hours later, I am out on the street, and I see the fellow beside me reach in and pickup the latest copy of HUB from a street box. I follow suit, extracting a copy for myself. I had a warm and fuzzy feeling pulling out this brand new, large format, yet very familiar, four color newsprint magazine. Definitely déjà vu all over again.
Great to see the new (old) format. I admit to being a little proprietary about the large format style, it was my baby for so long. Now with my aging eyes, I really value the larger ads. I am sure your advertisers will see the wisdom of this change.
All the best, and I hope you get great results from the changes. Welcome back.
Douglas Alder
Former Editor and Publisher of The Computer Paper (1988-1997)

I'd just like to thank you for going back to the old format of HUB: The Computer Paper.
I have been a long time loyal reader of every issue for 14 yrs and have always loved and preferred this format.
Yes it is also true that everyone refers to this paper as The Computer Paper so good choice on going back to this name.
It's good to try new things and ways of presenting your info but if the old way was better then it's great to see that you're also willing to take a step back and make those changes. Both my and friends and I are glad this choice was made.
Thanks again for the change back
Donovan Reid

You guys made the best decision. It now looks like a Computer mag and not a Condo Living Brochure.
Kerry Homatopoulos

I had to let you know I love your format change - I must be showing my age as the bigger format and print are easier on my eyes.
Great paper as always - keep up the good work!
Best Regards,
David Pineau

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- ✓ DVD/CD Re-writer
- ✓ Windows Vista
- ✓ Quiet Design

$609.00

What's Included?
AMD 3600 X2™ Dual-Core processor • Asus M2A mainboard • 1024mb 667Mhz DDR2 memory • Seagate 80gb SATA3 drive • ATI X1250 graphic controller with DVI port • Deluxe mid tower chassis • Acer 17 inch LCD display • Dual Layer DVD ReWriter • Keyboard, optical mouse, and Speakers • Microsoft Windows Vista Home • One year parts and labour warranty

Package as listed (#Q62176) **$609.00**
Microsoft Works add-on bundle (B11-01258) **$76.95**

Intel Core2Duo™ Basic Home Package

A high quality system perfect for home office or student use. Features Intel's new Core2Duo™ dual-core processor, DVD Writer, 17" LCD monitor and Microsoft's new Vista operating system.

$789.00

What's Included?
Intel e6320 Core2Duo™ 1.86Ghz processor • Asus P5L-MX mainboard • 512mb Kingston DDR2 memory • Seagate 160gb SATA3 drive • Intel 950 HD video controller • Premium mid-tower chassis • 17 inch 1280x1024 LCD display • DVD ReWriter • Keyboard and optical mouse • Microsoft Windows Vista Home Basic edition • Two year parts and labour warranty

Package as listed (#Q80450) **$789.00**
Add Microsoft Office Student 2007 edition **$128.95**

Intel Core2Duo™ Business

Core2Duo™ *Technology*

High performance graphics work station for the demanding professional user

- ✓ ATI 2600XT Graphics
- ✓ 20" HD LCD display
- ✓ Two years warranty
- ✓ DVD/CD Re-writer
- ✓ 2GB DDR2 memory
- ✓ Windows XP Pro

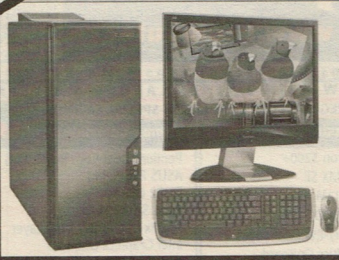
$1195.00

What's Included?
Intel e6750 Core2Duo™ 2.67Ghz processor • Intel P35 mainboard with RAID capabilities • 2048mb Kingston DDR2 memory • Seagate 250gb SATA3 drive • ATI 2600XT 256mb video • Ultra quiet chassis • 20 inch 1680x1050 LCD display • DVD ReWriter • Keyboard and optical mouse • Speakers • Microsoft Windows XP Pro • Two year parts and labour warranty

Package as listed (#Q62168) **$1195.00**
Add Microsoft Office Small Business 2007 edition • **$279.95**

Quad-Core Xtreme Gamers System IV

"Our Best Selling top-of-the-line gaming package"



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Complete Package
$2379
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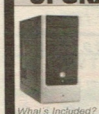
WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Intel Core2Quad™ Q6600 processor
- Intel mainboard with P35 chipset
- 4096mb Kingston DDR2 memory
- BFG "overclocked" 8800GTX video
- One 500Ggb drive for programs
- Two 250gb RAIDed drives for games
- Viewsonic 22" VX2235wm monitor
- Antec P182 Pro Tower chassis
- Dual Layer DVD/CD Re-Writer
- Gigabit LAN, 7.1 Surround Sound
- Firewire, eSATA, RAID, Exp. to 8GB
- Logitech MX710 combo with wireless laser mouse and multimedia keyboard
- OCZ GameXstream 700 watt power
- Microsoft Vista Premium OR XP Pro
- Two years parts and labour warranty

UPGRADE TOWER



***AMD Dual-Core** with built-in DVI*

A great unit for replacing existing computers or new installations.

$339.00

What's Included?
AMD 3800 X2 dual core processor • Asus M2A-VM mainboard • 1024mb DDR2 memory • Seagate 160gb SATA drive • ATI X1250 HD graphics • Deluxe mid tower case • 20X DVD writer with software

Package as listed (#Q62167) **$339.00**

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ML2010r (printer/20ppm/1200dpi) 124.95
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CLP300 (colour/17ppm/600dpi) 199.95
SCX-4521f (laser,printer, fax,copy) 256.95
CLX2160 (colour/printer/scanner copier/camera direct printing feature) 379.95

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2605dn (colour laser printer with built-in networking, duplexing, & dual paper trays) 409.95

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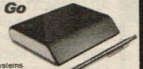
FreeAgent Go by Seagate



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- ✓ Fits in your shirt pocket
- ✓ Powered by USB ports
- ✓ For Mac or Windows Systems
- ✓ Great for backing up notebooks

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TX (312Mhz,100mb,Bluetooth/Wifi) 294.95

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Network Storage Enclosure

Shareable, expandable storage accessible by all PC's on your network . Add the storage capacity you need to share and backup your valuable digital content; music, games, photos, videos, and office documents—instantly, easily and securely . The SC101 enclosure lets you add one or two hard drives upto 750gb each so you decide how much storage you want. You can select either RAID 0 for awesome performance or RAID 1 to have your primary drive automatically backed up to the secondary drive.

- ✓ 100/1000 network support
- ✓ Hacker-proof solution
- ✓ Built-in server software
- ✓ Two year warranty
- ✓ Simple to use

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#NG-SC101NA

100/1000 Version $151.95
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NOTEBOOKS

Asus Extreme Gamer G2

The ASUS G2 notebook redefines mobile gaming with advance graphics, high-performance processor, exclusive display technology and unique design details.

- Intel Core2Duo T7500 2.2Ghz processor
- 2048mb 667Mhz dual channel memory
- 160gb 5,400 rpm SATA hard drive
- 17.0" 1680x1050 wide screen display
- 256mb nVidia 8600GT with HDMI
- 8x Lightscribe DVD/CD Writer
- Wireless LAN with 'N' support
- Two year global warranty
- Free carrying case and mouse
- Windows Vista Premium

Model# AS-G2S-A2 **$2133.95**

Acer Student Notebook

The Aspire 5610 combines three important elements: dual-core power, stunning multimedia and effortless connectivity in an affordable quality laptop.

- Intel Core Duo T2080 1.73Ghz processor
- 1024mb DDR2 dual channel memory
- 120gb 5,400 rpm hard drive
- 15.4" 1280x800 wide screen display
- Intel 950 HD video controller
- 8x Dual Layer DVD/CD Writer
- Wireless LAN with 'b/g' support
- Windows Vista Premium
- Built-in fax modem

Model# AC-AS5610-2418 **$712.95**

Asus 4lb Powerful Ultralite
Intel T7300 2.0Ghz Core2Duo™ processor, 1048mb, 120gb SATA drive, 13.3" wide display, nVidia 8400, Windows Vista Business edition, Lightscribe DVD writer
AS-W7S-A1W **$1510.95**

HP Value CoreDuo™ Unit
Intel CoreDuo™ 1.6Ghz processor, 1048mb, 80gb hard drive, 15.4" wide display, Intel 950 video, Windows Vista Business edition, DVD writer
HP-GH641AT-ABA **$851.95**

Lenovo 4.5lb Ultralite
Intel T7100 1.80Ghz Core2Duo™ processor, 1048mb, 160gb SATA drive, 12.1" wide display, Intel 3100 video, Windows Vista Premium edition, DVD writer
LE-07642BU **$1310.95**

Acer Low-Budget Marvel
Intel Celeron™ 1.6Ghz processor, 1048mb, 80gb hard drive, 15.4" wide display, Intel 950 video, Windows Vista Home Basic edition, DVD writer
AC-AS3690-2495 ..... **$632.95**

Fujitsu Lifebook™ A6025
Intel CoreDuo™ 1.86Ghz processor, 1048mb, 120gb hard drive, 15.4" wide display, Intel 950 video, Windows Vista Premium edition, DVD writer
FU-A6025-741020 ..... **$928.95**

Toshiba Satellite Pro
Intel CoreDuo™ 2.0Ghz processor, 1048mb, 120gb hard drive, 15.4" wide display, Intel 950 video, Windows Vista Business edition, DVD writer
TS-PSAE1CCH307C **$848.95**

Acer Dual-Core Notebook
Intel CoreDuo™ 1.7Ghz processor, 1048mb, 120gb hard drive, 15.4" wide display, Intel 950 video, Windows Vista Premium edition, DVD writer
AC-AS5610-2418 ..... **$712.95**

Fujitsu Lifebook™ A8410
Intel T7100 2.0Ghz Core2Duo™ processor, 1048mb, 80gb SATA drive, 15.4" wide display, nVidia 8400, Windows Vista Business edition, Dual-Layer DVD writer
FU-E8410-B51011 ..... **$1290.95**

Asus Business Performer
Intel CoreDuo™ 1.8Ghz processor, 1048mb, 120gb hard drive, 15.4" wide display, ATI 200 video, Windows Vista Premium edition, DVD writer
AS-F5R-B1 ..... **$944.95**

SERVERS

Rackmount 2U *Core2Duo™*
Server with 320GB Storage

Package as listed
$769.00
#Q61133

- ✓ Intel Core2Duo e4300
- ✓ 1GB DDR2 ECC memory
- ✓ Intel server motherboard
- ✓ Twin 160gb Seagate drives
- ✓ 4 x 3.5" & 1 x 5.25" bays
- ✓ Built-in Gigabit networking
- ✓ CD-ROM & Floppy drives
- ✓ Intel RAID 0/1/5/10
- ✓ Two year warranty

Pedestal *Core2Duo™*
640GB Server with RAID 5

- ✓ Intel CoreZDuo e6320
- ✓ 1GB DDR2 memory
- ✓ Intel server motherboard
- ✓ Single 160gb boot drive
- ✓ Three 160gb RAID5 array
- ✓ Hot-swap SATA drawers
- ✓ Built-in Gigabit networking
- ✓ DVD-ROM & Floppy drives
- ✓ Two year warranty

Package as listed
$929.00
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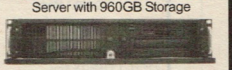
Rackmount 2U *Core2Duo™*
Server with 960GB Storage



- ✓ Intel Core2Duo e6800
- ✓ 2GB DDR2 ECC memory
- ✓ Intel server motherboard
- ✓ Three 320gb Seagate drives
- ✓ 4 x 3.5" & 1 x 5.25" bays
- ✓ Built-in Gigabit networking
- ✓ DVDRW & Floppy drives
- ✓ Intel RAID 0/1/5/10
- ✓ Two year warranty

Package as listed
$1109.00
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GREY-TECH EXTERNAL HARD DRIVES

Grey-Tech's premium external desktop hard drives feature both Firewire and USB 2.0 interfaces for PC and MAC use. The compact, high quality **cast aluminum** design radiates heat quickly and makes these units suitable for portable use. Silent operation . They are stackable and can be daisy chained using the IN/OUT Firewire ports. Interface cables and power adapter included. All models feature Seagate 7,200 rpm hard drives.

80GB (#GT-MINI080PRO) 109.95
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WD 1500GB (RAID 400/800USB) 580.68

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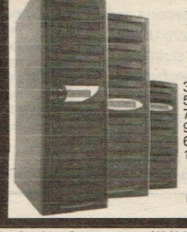

- ✓ Full self-contained design
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- ✓ Upto 18x DVD burning
- ✓ 64mb built-in cache
- ✓ Supports dual layer
- ✓ One year warranty

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5-Target Ped (#Q57097) ... 519.95
7-Target Ped (#Q56516) ... 589.95
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DVD DUPLICATORS

Push a button and make upto 11 copies of a DVD or CD automatically. Top quality Athena controller allows writing at upto 18x on DVD media.

Grey-Tech reserves the right to withdraw or change pricing, products, or services without notice. Grey-Tech assumes no responsibility for errors in content or pricing. Some items are special order or limited time offers. Accurate as of 09-20-07.

Google Presentations

Google Docs Beta has just added another office mainstay to its Docs portfolio. Google Docs presentation module was released into public beta without pomp or ceremony on Sept. 17 joining spreadsheet creating and word processing capabilities. Word of the presentations module was first heard in April of this year on the official Google blog and while the application lacks polish and is at present very bare bones, it's yet another arrow in the Google quiver. The bow, it can only be assumed, is aimed at Microsoft and its ubiquitous Office suite of productivity applications. What Google offers is a pared down version that may fit consumers needs but that seriously lacks the fine level control and options that business users and anyone creating anything but the most simple digital slides will require.

Presentations currently lacks refinement, offers users little flexibility and at present is not serious competition for Microsoft's PowerPoint presentation application despite the attractive price tag (or absence thereof). It deserves a spot in your "ones to watch" column though.

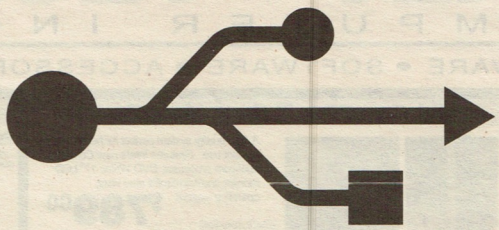
Universal cellular connections

From the "it's about time" department comes news of a universal data transfer and charging connection for cellular phones that could spell an end to proprietary, model-specific data transfer and power cables.

The top five cellular manufacturers recently agreed that all cell phone models they make moving forward will use a standard Micro USB connection for data transfer and charging.

Micro USB is a smaller version of Mini USB that is used in many mobile phones (including most BlackBerry handsets), digital cameras, MP3 players and other CE devices that require syncing and charging. The smaller Micro USB is a better fit with the ever shrinking cell phone and offers manufacturers more flexibility in creating ever smaller and more feature laden phones.

A limited number of cell phones like Motorola's RAZR2 V9m



currently use the standard. No word on when the models using the Micro USB connection will start rolling out in larger number.

The move to a data and charging standard will reduce the number of power adapters clogging outlets of multi-phone homes and will likely allow later generations of cell phones to ship without an included charging adapter under the assumption that purchasers likely already have one.

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ATX Case w/ 450W
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DualCore E2140 ....$259

2) Office Basic $223
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LG 18x DVD+/-RW Dual Layer
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ATX Case w/ 450W
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Master Chief arrives

The public hype machine is gearing up to fever pitch in preparation for the launch of Halo 3, the third installment in Bungie's incredibly popular Halo series and the first Halo title created for the Xbox 360.

About 500 retail locations stayed open past midnight in order to allow impatient gamers to wait for the clock to turn midnight on Tuesday, Sept. 25, the first day Halo 3 goes on sale.

With more than a million pre-orders on the books, Halo 3 is the fastest selling pre-order game on record. Four million copies are expected to be sold in North America in the first two months alone. To drive these numbers, Microsoft has embarked on a massive marketing and advertising campaign estimated by BrandWeek magazine to be worth about $10 million.

The storyline started with Halo on the original Xbox in November 2001, which sold five million copies worldwide, second only to Halo 2 for all-time best-selling game on Microsoft's console. Halo 2 had sold nine million copies worldwide as of February 2005. Halo 3 brings an end to the storyline in classic Halo cinematic style.

Back-to-basics with the Nokia 6300

For those turned off by the latest smartphone craze, the Nokia 6300 goes back-to-basics with a classic candy bar design and sleek stainless steel body. It provides all the features that a cell phone was meant to have: good display, long battery life, small size, clear calls, easy menu navigation and scratch resistant casing. A few extras keep it in touch with the times, such as an MP3 player with a microSD slot (supporting up to 2GB), Bluetooth 2.0 with stereo support, 2.0MP camera, FM radio and an integrated hands-free speaker.

The large 2-inch screen is amazingly crisp, colorful and clear. The two upper right and left selection buttons can be customized as shortcuts to pretty much anything, although "Lock Keys" and "Silent" are probably your best options. Pressing a button requires a bit of muscle, but reduces the likelihood of an accidental call. It's small – 106 x 44 x 12 mm – which is perfect for slipping into pockets, yet retains a solid 91g weight indicative of the good old days when cellphones were built to last.

The Nokia 6300 is priced at $300 or $75 with a 3-year agreement from Fido.

Nokia 6300

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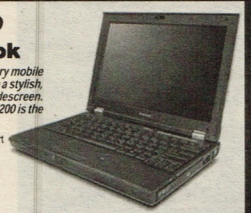

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The ergonomic office

Creating a healthy and usable workspace

Pain, throbbing, discomfort, aching, tingling, numbness, burning, stiffness in your neck, shoulders and wrists – these are all warning signs of a Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). If left untouched, they can develop into a full-blown musculoskeletal disorder (MSD). Because these injuries develop slowly, you may not even know that you have one. They are also very difficult to treat.

RSIs and MSDs are more common than you'd think. "A recent epidemiological study followed 632 newly hired computer users for up to three years and found that more than 50 percent of them reported repetitive strain symptoms during their first year of their new job. Worse, 68 percent of the reported RSI symptoms were deemed to be severe enough to be classified as musculoskeletal disorders (198 out of 291 instances)," reports Microsoft in a white paper, "The Important of Ergonomic Input Devices in the Workplace."

Performing the same routines, day after day – typing on a keyboard, staring at a monitor, talking on the phone, clicking away on a mouse – can cause injuries to your muscles, joints, tendons, cartilage, blood vessels, tendons and ligaments. And while our bodies have the natural ability to heal themselves against these forms of soft tissue damage, with repeated and prolonged exposure, sometimes they just can't keep up.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is the most well-known MSD yet represents only a small percentage of injuries, says Dan ODell, Ergonomist and User Researcher for the Hardware Division of Microsoft. The most common problems, according to ODell, are found in necks and shoulders.

Setting up an ergonomic workspace with proper hardware, furniture, alignment and lighting will help reduce your risk. You should also establish a routine

- Monitor and keyboard centred with body
- Window at least three feet away from desk
- Desk situated so light comes from the side
- Relaxed shoulders
- Back of seat at 100- to 110-degree angle
- Lower back support with hips placed against back of chair
- Knees bent at 90-degree angle
- One- to two-inches of seating available on either side of hips
- Adjustable chair height
- Secure chair with five castors
- Back of knees have one-fist clearance from front of seat
- Feet flat on the floor, or on a footrest
- Document holder placed between monitor and keyboard
- Clutter-free leg room
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- Straight wrists
- Monitor one arm's length away from face
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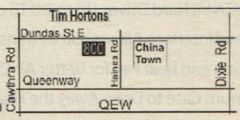

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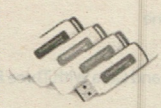
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110-degree angle, as a slight recline reduces pressure on your lower back.

While sitting, you should have a comfortable, natural position. There is not one "perfect" way to sit, and even if you think you found it, sitting in that same position all day could cause prolonged damage. Remember to change your posture throughout the day.

What keyboard and mouse you use has a significant impact on your health and productivity at work. According to a Microsoft user research survey, mice and keyboards are the objects used most often during the day, second only to a pillow. Using these peripherals creates low-impact forces to your body, so avoid bad habits such as clicking keys hard, resting your wrists or palms on a surface while typing or clicking, gripping your mouse tightly or relaxing your arms, hands or wrists on the edge of your desk.

A study on ergonomic computer peripherals by Moore and Swanson, "The Effect of Alternative Keyboards on Musculoskeletal Symptoms and Disorders" found that fixed split keyboards have a significant positive effect on musculoskeletal symptoms. The split keyboard "better accommodates the natural posture of each arm," explains Microsoft, compared to straight keyboards that require you to modify your posture to an unnatural position. Microsoft was the first company to introduce a fixed ergonomic keyboard and has since become a leader in this category. Microsoft employs a full-time ergonomist and bases its "ergo" label on extensive university research.

The Natural Ergonomic Keyboard 4000 ($74.95, www.microsoft.com/hardware) is the best-selling wired keyboard in the U.S., and the company's latest wireless model, the Natural Ergonomic Desktop 7000 ($149.95), is based on that popular design. This Desktop set includes the Natural Wireless Ergonomic Keyboard 7000 and Natural Wireless Laser Mouse 7000. The keyboard features a padded palm rest that helps your wrist stay straight while typing. When you stop typing, the padding is also a good place to rest your hands. There is a removable palm lift with a seven-degree reverse tilt that helps reduce tension in wrists and prevents them from dropping while typing. The Natural arc curves the keyboard layout so your pinky fingers don't need to stretch so far to reach the keys at either end. To keep your arms in a natural handshaking position, there is a 14-

UCLA-recommended stretches to perform during your 20/20/20 break

1. Spread the fingers of both hands apart while keeping your wrists straight. Hold for three seconds and complete five times.
2. Massage your fingers, wrists and forearms.
3. Lean forward and squeeze your shoulder blades together, bringing your elbows behind your back. Keep your shoulders lowered.
4. Turn your head and look over both shoulders to stretch your neck.

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for light exercises and stretch breaks. Your after-hours activities are also important: make sure you get the proper amount of sleep to allow your body time to heal, exercise to maintain a level of flexibility and eat well. Not only will these precautions protect you from physical damage, they will increase your comfort and productivity at work.

Your primary danger is repetition. So while it's good to be focused, every now and then, you must snap out of it and take a break. When you get wrapped up in an activity on your computer, your blink rate goes down. This puts additional strain on your eyes, says ODell, and eye fatigue is correlated to muscle disorders. Rest your eyes every 20 minutes by covering them for 10-15 seconds, or look away from your screen and focus on a distant object.

Proper lighting will also help. If your desk is near a window, minimize glare on your screen by placing your desk sideways so the light comes in from either the left or right. Make sure there is at least three feet between the window and your desk. Task lighting should come from both the left and right side to reduce shadows. Documents should be illuminated brightly, while screen lighting should be kept low. According to UCLA's ergonomics department, a 1:3:10 ratio is ideal: your task area should be up to three times brighter than your immediate surrounding area, and 10 times brighter than the peripheral area. Too much contrast should be avoided.

Age also comes into play. For example, a 60-year old worker requires up to 10 times more light than a 20-year old worker, says UCLA. Full spectrum fluorescent lights, which mimic natural sunlight, are the best on the eyes. Stay away from bright white bulbs, which can cause headaches. Other little things you can do include keeping your monitor clean and adjusting settings such as brightness, contrast and font size to put the least amount of strain on your sight.

Make sure the top of your monitor screen is eye level and that the monitor is one arm's length away from your face. If you use a laptop, your monitor will most likely fall below this measurement, so pick up a notebook stand to raise the screen to the proper eye level. These are priced between $45 and $100, with the more expensive units including features such as a built-in USB hub.

The height of your desk should be adjusted so that your keyboard and mouse sit at elbow height. Many desks are set too high, says ODell, designed for handwriting instead of computer use. Average desks are between 29-30 inches high. For typing, they should be set a few inches lower, around 26-27 inches.

Shopping for a proper office chair may seem intimidating, with prices ranging from $140 to $600. But more expensive doesn't necessarily mean better where ergonomics are concerned. Aside from sitting down to determine whether or not a chair feels comfortable, there are a few key features you need to look for: make sure it has an adjustable height, provides lower back support (with your hips placed securely against the back of the chair) and that the seat is the right width and depth for your body shape. A chair with five prongs at its base will be more stable than one with only four. Breathable fabrics are a plus, as are seats without deep seams or buttons that could cause localized pressure points.

Determine seat height by making sure it allows you to rest both of your feet flat on the floor, with your knees bent at a 90-degree angle. Make sure the seat is the proper depth: you should be able to fit your fist between the back of your knee and the front of your seat. The seat should also be wide enough that there is at least one inch on either side of your hips. Men tend to need deeper seats to accommodate long legs, says UCLA, while women need wider seats to accommodate hips. The back of your seat should be positioned at a 100- to

Microsoft Natural Wireless Ergonomic Desktop 7000

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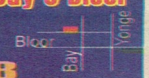

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degree gable angle.

Some people find the split keyboard too difficult to adjust to. If this is the case, Microsft also offers keyboards with the Comfort Curve design. While not as beneficial as a 12-degree split angle, the Comfort Curve 6-degree curved design still provides a more natural wrist posture than regular straight models. The new Microsoft Wireless Entertainment Desktop 8000 ($349.95) is an elegant keyboard and mouse set that features the Comfort Curve, as well as freedom from wires via Bluetooth, soft keys, Vista shortcuts, and backlighting with a proximity sensor that detects your fingers approaching the keys. (Mac users can use the lower centre button as the Apple key.)

Considering the average typist on a conventional QWERTY keyboard moves his or her fingers between 12 and 20 miles per day (says Microsoft), picking up an ergonomic keyboard is a good idea and costs about the same as a premium regular keyboard. Also try to utilize one-touch buttons and shortcut keys. Shortcuts can eliminate common keystrokes by up to 40 percent (according to internal Microsoft research).

Mice are used three times more than the keyboard, says ODell, who helped develop the Natural Ergonomic Keyboard 4000, Wireless Entertainment Desktop 8000 and the Natural Wireless Laser Mouse 6000 ($99.99 at Best Buy). With traditional mice, he explains, people tend to rest the heels of their palms on their desks, which places pressure over the carpal tunnel. The Natural Wireless Laser Mouse 6000 is designed to distribute even pressure by filling the gap that occurs when your hand is resting in a natural position. The mouse slopes your wrist to a vertical, rather than horizontal, position, which removes that dangerous lower carpal tunnel pressure. Slants and scoops support the natural curve in your fingers so you don't strain to keep them straight.

Only a right-handed version is available, due to supply-and-demand. About 10 percent of users are left-handed, explains ODell, and only 10 percent of these users actually use a left-handed mouse. Many lefties either adapt to a right-handed mouse or use a symmetrical mouse that works for both. Laptops users should also invest in a good mouse and ignore their trackpads for regular use.

The placement of objects on your desk is also important. Objects you often use, such as your phone, notepad and mouse, should be located within two to three feet of your body. Your monitor and keyboard should rest in the centre of your desk, directly in front of you. If you find yourself spending a lot of time on the phone and often crank your neck to hold the handset in between your shoulder and cheek, you should consider switching to a wireless headset so you can free up your hands and prevent strain on your neck. A document holder (about $25) is handy for placing pages upright on your desk while typing or reading and should be spaced between your keyboard and monitor.

Clean up any clutter underneath your desk so there is adequate room for your legs to move. If you can't adjust the height of your desk and need to raise your chair so your elbows are level with your keyboard and mouse, you can purchase a foot rest for about $25 to raise your feet to the appropriate height.

Remember, the key is to avoid prolonged repetition. So switch back and forth between typing and handwriting, interchange between your mouse and keyboard (such as scrolling vs. arrow keys, or menu bar selections vs. keyboard shortcuts), use shortcut buttons, communicate with email and then make some phone calls – mix it up, add some variety. Don't become a robot at your desk.

Every hour, take a five to 10 minute break from the activity you were performing and do something else. Try to enforce the 20/20/20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at a point 20 feet away from your monitor for 20 seconds. You should also take a one or two-minute break to stretch.

And don't trust a product simply because it has "ergonomic" on the label. There are no regulations in place for ergonomic branding, says ODell, so you should research the company and make sure you can trust their brand.

By Jennifer Kavur

Microsoft Wireless Entertainment Desktop 8000

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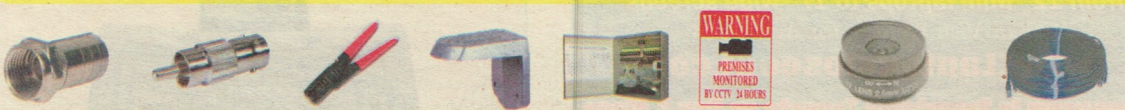

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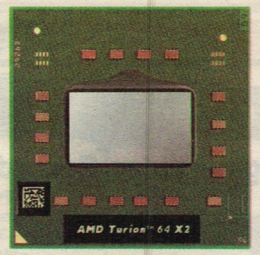
The Ultimate Home Office

What you need to thoroughly geek up your SOHO environment

When I first entered the ranks of the self-employed back in the late 1980s and set out to equip my den as a home office, I concentrated on the ergonomics—a good chair, a good desk, a decent desk lamp and the like. I needed a PC too, of course, but the choices were so limited and the prices so exorbitant that the decision-making process wasn't much of a process at all. I bought a fax machine because it was my sole method of data communication in those pre-Internet days, but other tech peripherals such as copiers and scanners either hadn't been invented or were simply

Intel Core 2 Duo chipsets



AMD Athalon 64 X2

too expensive. And I remember stocking a bookcase with books because I certainly couldn't turn to anything like a "Web" for information.

Today, the ergonomics still count. However, it's the tech that really makes a home office fly. It all starts, of course, with a good computer.

Computers: What's your style?

Your first decision when choosing a PC is whether you even want a desktop PC. If you spend a lot of your business hours outside your home office—on the road, in hotels, at meetings—you may need or want a notebook too. And then you'll need to decide if you have the financial wherewithal to spring for two different computers. For the moment, we'll pretend you have that financial wherewithal, and look at the current PC market.

The PC landscape is not what it used to be. The fact is that it doesn't take a ton o' bucks these days to buy a desktop computer capable of handling office basics such as email, spreadsheets and letters/business proposals.

If you don't foresee yourself going much beyond these essentials, consider a unit structured around an Intel "Core 2 Duo" processor. Granted, an entry-level Intel "Celeron" processor-based system will cost you even less, but the multitasking smoothness that comes from multiple processing cores, not to mention the performance boost, will give you a better experience. Currently, the Core 2 Duo lineup is extremely wide-ranging (the processor is running from the $150 mark all the way up to $400 and more), but the lower end of the scale should suit your needs.

As an alternative, consider Intel's chief rival, AMD, which also has mainstream dual core processors. They

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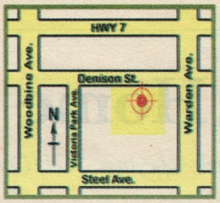

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are called the "Athlon 64 X2" and like the Intel Core 2 Duo line, come in a number of performance variations.

Keeping with our economy-minded yet best bang-for-the-buck parameters, we'll set up the rest of the system as follows: 1GB of DDR2-667MHz RAM, a 200-320GB hard drive (price differences are small so if your budget permits, go for bigger capacity), a reliable motherboard with integrated sound and network facilities—something in the ASUS P5B series would do just fine—and a DVD burner.

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Graphic content ahead

Though many prebuilt budget systems utilize integrated, on-the-motherboard video, we'll move up just a bit from that just in case you want to play the odd game, and go with an affordable but competent video card like the new BFG GeForce 8600GT.

You don't want to go cheap on the quality of your display considering you'll be looking at it all the time, but we do need to save some bucks. Thusly, we'll opt away from the 20-inch-plus monsters and go with a perfectly usable, highly rated 19-inch widescreen Samsung SyncMaster 931BW .

If your needs are a bit more substantial—in other words, if you're into 3D design or you also want to play games and movies, stockpile large files and just generally do everything faster and more capably—you'll need to spend a few more dollars. Stick with the Core 2 Duo processor but move on up to one with a 1066MHz cache (cache is extremely fast temporary memory). Any processor with that much cache is guaranteed to also sport a high clock speed.

Add 2GB of DDR2 800MHz RAM, two 320-plus GB hard drives (one for your applications and one for your files, or use the second for backup), an ASUS P5N32 motherboard (ASUS is a very reliable name and this motherboard supports all manner of future upgrades) and the DVD burner. An alternative to the DVD burner, which is still somewhat pricey but worth considering if you need lots of archiving, are the next generation optical recorders, either Blu-ray or HD-DVD.

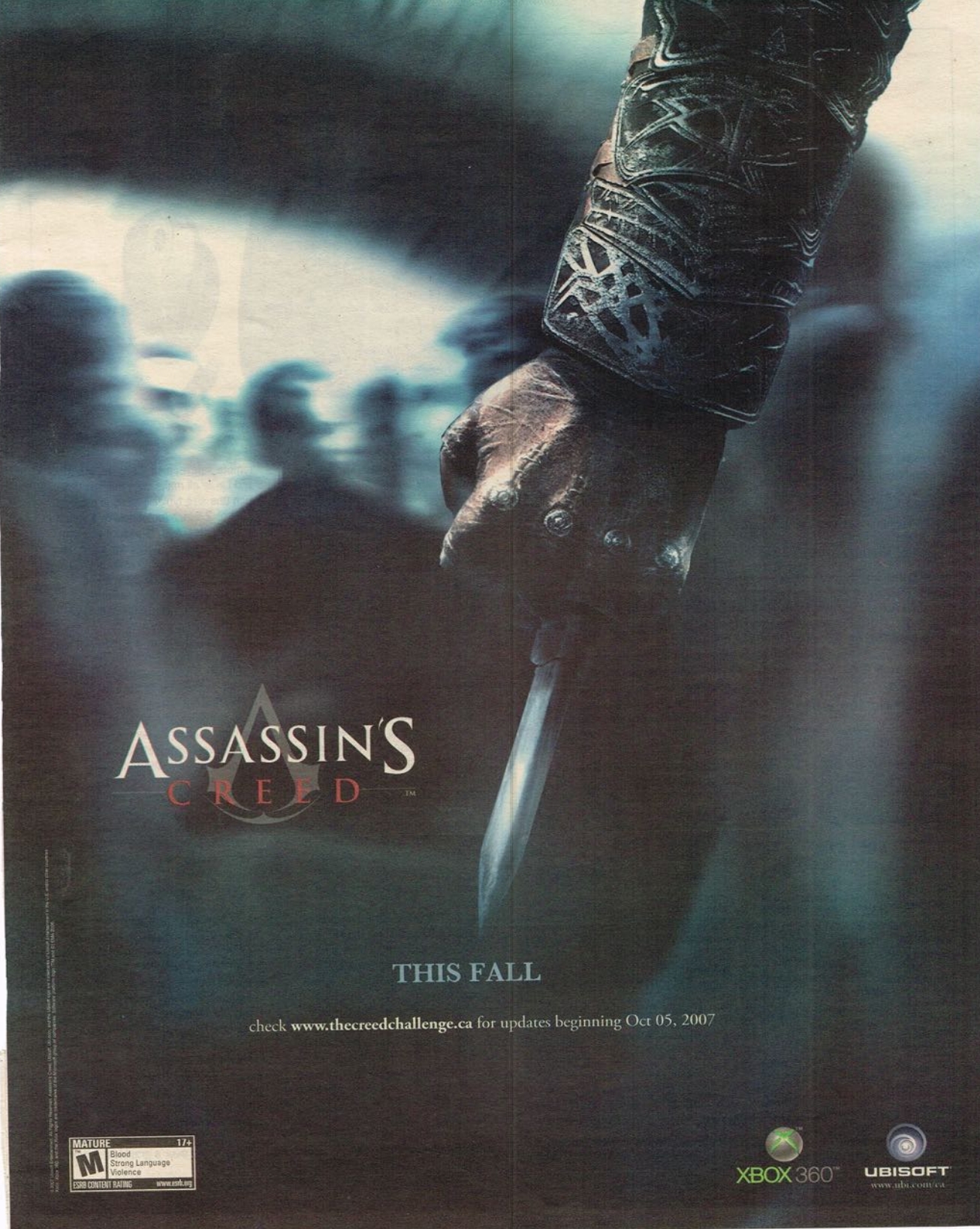
Wise shoppers would also spring for a portable hard drive for carting files to other locations or making backups for remote safekeeping. Seagate, Maxtor and LaCie all make units that use 3.5-inch (the size typically used in desktop PCs) or 2.5-inch (notebook) in a variety of capacities. And, to ensure you can play the greatest games for a very long time to come or run virtually any 3D modeling program on the market, we'll go with an EVGA E-GeForce 8800GTS video card with 640MB of onboard memory.

A good PC demands a good-sized screen, and any 22-inch-plus Samsung or LG with a sub 5ms access time should do the trick. In the end, this is a competent but not ridiculously pricey PC that'll do most everything your business and leisure life demands.

Do you really need Microsoft's latest operating system, Windows Vista? No you do not, but you may not have a choice because it comes installed on virtually all new computers, and it is practically impossible buy Windows XP separately in retail stores. Vista is far more resource hungry than Windows XP. At the very least, you should have 2GB of memory installed.

You can take it with you

Your choice of a notebook computer depends on whether you plan to spring for a PC. If you don't, you'll want to look for a "desktop replacement" notebook, a comparatively hefty machine that will easily handle both parts of the desktop and portable equation. A nice, big 17-inch screen is almost de rigeur in notebooks of this ilk, and, considering this will be your only computer, an Intel Core 2 Duo processor of at least 2GHz, a 200-plus GB hard drive, and 2GB RAM should be considered mandatory. A video card with dedicated video memory is preferred over a graphics chipset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to allow you to finish what you are doing and save your current work. Often you can programme the unit to perform an automated shutdown of your computer, should the power fail when you are not at home.

Most often shaped like a standard six-outlet power bar, a surge protector features a built-in circuit breaker that trips when it senses a spike. Surge protectors are rated in terms of Joules, with a 1000-Joules (1 kJ) rating being the standardly accepted benchmark. APC and Belkin both manufacture reliable surge protectors that begin, approximately, at the $30 mark. Powersquid (www.powersquid.com) offers a pricey but compelling solution that incorporates not just an extremely high Joules rating, but also a gaggle of breakout outlets (they look like tentacles), thus affording ample room for those cumbersome power bricks that come with some electronic devices. Regardless of your final selection, look for a unit with a "connected equipment" guarantee—few under the $10 mark will carry one.

Sound advice

Far more fun that buying a surge protector is adding sound to your computing setup. Truth is that the built-in speakers in a notebook, even a honkin' big desktop replacement notebook, aren't particularly convincing. Nor are the speakers packaged with most pre-built PCs. What you need is a three-way setup consisting of two desktop "satellite" speakers and one subwoofer. These are often sold as "2.1" speaker systems. Granted, we're not building a monster gaming rig here, but there's a very real chance you'll occasionally want to listen to music, watch a movie or maybe even play a game.

If saving money is your goal, few manufacturers build sub-$100, self-powered computer speakers as well as Logitech and Altec Lansing. You'll need to drop at least $50 to rise above the bottom of the barrel stuff. At the high end of the spectrum ($200 and above) sits the Klipsch entries. Great units all around, with bass that'll rattle the windows. For the truly well-healed, any of the Klipsch ProMedia series will impress both you and the neighbours.

Printers and multifunctions

You'll clearly need a printer to output your data. The question is whether you need a standalone printer. The answer is: Probably not. Today's space-saving multifunction printers do it all (printing, faxing, scanning and copying), and many of them do it well. Canon's extensive PIXMA series scores high ratings all around in the inkjet category, as does the HP Photosmart series.

You should remember, though, that although inkjets are great for photos, the page per penny printing cost of inkjet cartridges are generally quite a bit higher than that of lasers (at least the beefier lasers), and the text quality and speed are generally lower. All-in-one lasers, such as Canon's strictly black-and-white imageCLASS series and Lexmark's x500n and x502n colour units, are good bets. Really, the only reason to be stuck on standalone is if you happen to do prodigious amounts of printing, and then you'd want to turn to something brawny such as the Brother HL-5250DN or the HP LaserJet P2015d. Both are in the $300 to $500 range.

We've got to start communicating

To connect your computer(s) and other devices to the outside world, you have two high-speed options – cable and DSL. But you'll need not only the modem your cable or phone company company likely provides, but also a router. Routers allow you to connect more devices (usually a total of four for entry-level routers) and they offer security in the form of a firewall. The prices of routers vary wildly, depending on speed and wireless capabilities. D-Link's expensive ($160) DIR-655 Xtreme N Gigabit Router, based on the freshly certified "Draft N" standard, delivers excellent range, world class speed via both its wired and wireless connections and super-slick good looks. Those who don't need wireless connectivity and can make do with standard non-gigabit wired speeds don't need to spend nearly as much—models such as the sub-$70 Linksys BEFSR41 or TP-Link's TL-WR641G should do just fine.

Email is good, but there's nothing like a good, old-fashioned conversation to cement relations. On that note, you're going to need a phone. But first, you'll have to decide if you want to utilize your traditional phone line or move on to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services such as Vonage.

One day in the near future, VoIP will likely kill off plain old telephone service (POTS) because it's simply a superior technology that saves most users money. In the meantime, it's a good alternative to traditional technology that's growing in popularity even though it's impacted by the same things that sporadically interrupt email or Internet surfing. To get on the VoIP bandwagon, you either need to purchase an analog telephone adapter such as the sub-$80 D-Link VTA to use with your current analog phone, or go with a brand new VoIP-equipped phone like the VTech IP8100-2 ($200). Another option exists in the form of hybrid phones that allow you to do both VoIP and POTS. Panasonic's cordless GLOBARANGE lineup, priced between $100 and $200, does just that.

Chances are, however, that most home office folk will stick with their current analog phone lines, at least for the time being. Reliable, corded phones with a couple of lines and a speakerphone feature make a great deal of sense in the business environment. Unless you see yourself moving around quite a bit when you're talking, check out corded business phones from well-regarded manufacturers such as AT&T and Panasonic. If you really feel the need to move while you talk, look into the Panasonic KXTG6700. This monster phone features high frequency 5.8GHz wireless technology, two independent lines, a handset LCD and an integrated answering machine. The $300 price is the only hiccup.

If you don't want to hand over a bunch of extra bucks to the phone company every month for a second line, be sure to check whether your local provider offers a "smart ring" feature. Though it isn't a second line per se, smart ring does give your home a second phone number and a distinctive ring when that number is called, at a fraction of the cost of a true second line. Moreover, you don't even need a two-line phone to utilize the service.

Of course, there will be times when you can't make it to your phone to answer all those incoming calls. The question of an answering machine vs. voice mail is something every SOHO worker faces, and there are positives and negatives on both sides. In an answering machine, you have a solution you pay for up front. No other costs are involved, and the entire thing remains within the comfort of your home for immediate access. Indeed, an answering machine may well be incorporated into the telephone you purchase. However, depending on your phone setup, callers may encounter busy signals or long waits while you finish up with your current call. Moreover, many of the answering machines at the big box stores sound muffled and indistinct. The best idea is to try before you buy, or at least be prepared to audition more than one unit at home.

The big drawback in voice mail is ongoing charges. Otherwise, it's arguably the better way to go. With voice mail, you don't need to worry about whether an answering machine is turned on or off. You don't need to worry about busy signals or audio clarity. Ultimately, the decision is very much subjective.

By Gord Goble

Lexmark X500n

that's integrated on the motherboard and shares the computer's main memory. Bluetooth capabilities, built-in cameras, memory card readers and biometric security measures such as fingerprint readers are just some of the perks you should look for.

Conversely, if you've decided you'll need a PC, your notebook doesn't need to be quite so large. In fact, you might want to look for portability factors like small size and light weight or lower cost. Capable models with 14.1-inch and 15.4-inch screens and power-efficient AMD Turion and Intel Centrino processors are now commonplace, and many are priced under $1,000. You won't have the storage space, the power or the graphics-handling capabilities of a desktop replacement, but it'll be easier to lug around and it'll cost you half as much.

There are a couple of other classes of notebook computers that you may also want to consider. The ultraportable is, as the name implies, designed mainly with portability as the key factor. This means the unit (including the screen) will be relatively small. Miniaturization has its price, so ultraportables also tend to be somewhat expensive. A road warrior class of notebook tries to balance a number of key factors—performance, weight and battery life. These are often the only computer that people like traveling executives or sales people have, so they are also used as desktop replacements, but without the weight penalty or battery hit imposed by 17-inch screens.

The Mac connection

An alternative to Windows PCs are Apple's iMac and Mac Mini desktop machines and iBook notebook machines. Macs have always had the reputation of being more expensive that PCs, but now that Apple has shifted to Intel Core 2 Duo processors in these lines, there are more common points on which to base a comparison. If you compare Apple's line with other international brand-name computers, you might be surprised at how small the price difference is. But house brand or white box computers are still significantly less expensive.

Apple iMac

Of mice and men (and women)

No computer discussion would be complete without a couple of words on mice. And those words are cordless and laser. Cordless, because losing that darn cable is truly a freeing experience. Moreover, cordless mice now run comfortably for several years before expiring. Laser, because laser mice not only weigh less, they're also more precise.

Cordless keyboards are pretty nifty too (because they don't have a cord, natch), especially if they're equipped with hotkeys across the top for instant, one-touch access to your most utilized commands. Logitech leads the way in both mice and keyboards, and for good reason—the company makes good stuff at reasonable prices. Its entire Cordless Desktop line (one part mouse, one part keyboard) is great—it's up to you to decide what features you want and need. Early cordless mice and keyboards used to communicate with the computer via infrared signals. Later, radio-frequency (RF) offered a better communications method. Today, RF is being joined by products that use Bluetooth.

Dirty power

Whereas mice get a lot of attention, the lowly (it sits on the floor) uninterruptible power supply or its lesser cousin, the surge protected power bar, doesn't get nearly enough. Yet if a power spike has ever destroyed your data or fried an electronic component or if you've lost hours of work when the power suddenly goes out, you know AC power management can be your best friend. In a home office, it's a necessity, especially if you live in an area that regularly experiences power outages, brownouts, lightning storms, etc.

The uninterruptible power supply, or UPS, has four main parts: a battery, a battery charger, a power inverter and sophisticated circuitry to make these systems work together. The inverter converts the DC power from the battery into AC power for your computer, while the charger keeps the battery charged.

While there are a number of different types of UPS, a common one for home use is called the Standby UPS system. Under normal conditions, the battery/inverter system is in standby mode. When you lose AC power (e.g., a power outage), a circuit detects this and instantly switches over to battery power. The battery has enough capacity

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No new wires

HomePlug's continuing saga of computing anywhere

Before WiFi, computing anywhere in the house meant installing Ethernet cabling and RJ45 jacks everywhere. Not a simple task and best done as part of a major renovation – unless you are making a home decorating statement with exposed Cat5. A few solutions have appeared over the past decade, but as WiFi gained traction and publicity, these alternatives faded from the limelight.

One of these, called HomePlug, is alive and well and the solution is as appealing as when the HomePlug Powerline Alliance introduced its first standard in 2001. HomePlug's answer to "no new wires" is simple – use the wires that already run to every room in your home. That would be your household electrical wiring. It was a brilliant concept, and early attempts at this were partially successful, but problems like electrical interference noise and no standardization among manufacturers needed resolution. Today, the technology has matured and is very usable.

There are several manufacturers offering a few dozen products that piggyback Ethernet data communications signals on your home's electrical wiring. The products offer data transfer equal to or better than WiFi, and standardization has meant that company A's products should work with Company B's, as is the case with Ethernet products in general. I recently had a chance to test Actiontec's MegaPlug AV products – the "AV" gives a hint that these are meant to handle the big bandwidth that PC-based home theatre content generates. The original HomePlug ran at around 14Mbps and later generations such as Actiontec's standard MegaPlugs run 85Mbps. The "AV" designation bumps the bandwidth up considerably – these devices will transfer data at up to 200Mbps. By comparison, WiFi's various versions come in at 11Mbps (802.11b), 54Mbps (802.11g) and 100Mbps (802.11n).

Setting up a HomePlug network practically as simple as plugging in a toaster – two toasters, actually, since the basic MegaPlug AV kit comes with two adapters. These resemble AC adapters with a two-pronged plug for the electrical outlet and an RJ45 jack for Ethernet. They also have three LED status lights. You plug one MegaPlug into any electrical outlet near a router, hub or cable/DSL modem, and then connect a length Ethernet cable between the MegaPlug and your network connection. Where you plug in the second MegaPlug adapter really doesn't matter – and that's the essential beauty of HomePlug technology. Any of your electrical outlets are now also Ethernet ports once you plug the adapter in. You can connect a computer, a network printer, another hub or wireless access point to the Ethernet port on the MegaPlug and you are networked. My MegaPlug experience was really as simple as that – no drivers to load, just plug and play. A small "but" is that if you want to manage the devices, such as changing the 128-bit encryption key, you do need to install software that comes on the included CD.

In my house, the cable modem comes into a room on the northeast corner, but isn't it always the case that where I sometimes want to compute is in a spare room in the southwest corner. My old 802.11b access point is barely detectable across that distance and I've been meaning to pull a network cable to a more central location and relocate the wireless access point there. Now I don't have to because I have the access point plugged into the MegaPlug in the middle of the house. I now get a full 11Mbps signal strength throughout the house, which is more than enough for everyday tasks like email and Internet access. If I want to take advantage of the bigger bandwidth that the AV product offers, I can plug my laptop directly into the Megaplug Ethernet port.

Actiontec's product conforms to the alliance's HomePlug AV standard, which is the next generation specification designed to address high-bandwidth entertainment applications in the home. It is backwardly compatible with the existing HomePlug 1.0 standard. You can use up to 16 HomePlug devices on the same network.

Giving HomePlug an industrial strength footprint is a technology called BPL, or Broadband over Powerline, a potential competitor to other high speed network technologies. Just as cable networking uses existing cableTV cabling and DSL works over existing phone lines, BPL is an attempt to exploit the electrical grid itself for data communication. Victoria-based 3One Networks Corp. is one company working to commercialize BPL. Earlier this year, 3One developed a BPL-based power grid management system in China, which allows the power company to monitor the grid's performance.

By David Tanaka

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In the Lab: Online Operating Systems

A Window to Web 2.0

In the days of arguably bloated operating systems and terabyte hard drives, how about an OS that fits in your browser cache? That's the promise that's made and varyingly kept by a host of OSes that run entirely in your browser window.

The potential benefits of an online-only operating system are obvious. Forget remote access, the promise is of an entirely online desktop, whether you own a desktop or not. In theory, anywhere in the world that you're able to get a reliable internet and reasonably fat internet connection, you have access to your desktop. Not a browser window showing files on your home computer but your own, password protected and always available desktop.

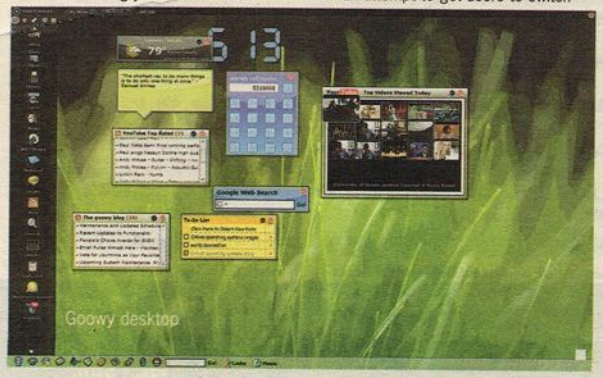
At least, that's the idea.

With the current proliferation of online OSes floating around, it stands to reason that only the strong shall survive. In other words, if you pitch your tent in a losing online OS's field, you stand to lose your data along with it. Also bear in mind that you'll be entrusting your data to a third party, likely outside of Canada and therefore not subject to Canadian laws.

As it stands, online operating systems are a neat novelty to play around with and can prove a useful utility for some users but a core desktop system where business is conducted, sensitive information stored and as a system that replaces your desktop or laptop's operating system? Not quite yet.

Some online operating systems prove a boon for managing online collaboration and serve as the ultimate gateway homepage.

While it's true some of these web-based operating system aren't quite ready for the big leagues just yet. That said, these are powerful online tools; whether ensuring you have access to important documents anywhere, keeping your data in-sync no matter where you access it and keeping your most important information available anywhere.



Goowy

www.goowy.com

What's available: Email, calendar, IM, games and Widget- / Gadget-like "Webits" and more

Closest to: The bastard child of Windows Vista and Mac OSX

Switch? Not yet but it's got some potential

Speed: Very good

Platforms tested and working: Firefox 2.0.0.7, Internet Explorer 7.0.5370.11

Requirements: Adobe Flash

Space: 1GB up to 5GB

Cost: Free (1GB) or $4.99/mo. (5GB)

At first glance, it looks like Goowy's got it all; clever name? Check, Goowy is a play on Graphical User Interface or GUI. Email? Check, complete with beta calendaring option that looks remarkably like a scaled down Outlook Express. Games? Those too. Instant messaging? It's in beta but present and accounted for. Word processor... wait, no. That's mysteriously missing. There is no document management system at all. Users are offered 1GB of free online storage for documents or whatever other files don't violate the terms of service (TOS), which seems to be most.

Storing files on Goowy is a simple affair, functioning much like the attach button on an online email service. In an attempt to keep users honest, the file upload window informs of a 10MB upload limit for a single file. An Actions toolbar allows for the batch uploading of numerous files; just hold down CTRL as you would when selecting multiple files within your desktop OS.

In an attempt to get users to switch over full-time, at least for things like checking web-based email, Goowy offers an incredibly simple and effective utility for integrating an existing email account with your Goowy desktop. Selecting Gmail, for example, will populate Gmail specific port and security settings leaving you to fill out the name, email address, password and a few other simple fields.

DeskTopTwo

Goowy is entirely Flash based, which is both a good and a bad thing. While it limits the end-user customizability and in this case, eliminates the possibility of right-clicking (potentially a hard habit for some OS users to break), it allows for a flashier interface and some fancy graphic icing. Take, for example the decidedly (and decidedly cheeky) Windows Vista-looking default desktop wallpaper and the decidedly Mac OSX-inspired task bar across the bottom of the interface, complete with icons that jump and bounce when clicked.

DeskTopTwo

www.desktoptwo.com

What's available: Web site editor, notepad, IM, MP3 player, blog, email, calendar, address book and more

Closest to: Windows NT, interface wise

Switch? There's a strong argument to be made

Speed: Very good

Platforms tested and working: Firefox 2.0.0.7, Internet Explorer 7.0.5370.11

Requirements: Java, Adobe Flash and Acrobat

Space: 1GB free up to 50GB

Cost: Free, US$25, US$45, US$95 and US$185 for 1GB, 5GB, 10GB, 25GB and 50GB of storage

DeskTopTwo is pretty serious; so serious, in fact, that they've got a premium offering up for $185/yr. There is, of course, a free version of the web GUI desktop available for those looking to experiment.

It's laid out logically and immediately brings to mind a cross between Windows XP and Vista and Ubuntu.

An advertising bar sits at the top centre of the screen and is at about 30 per cent transparency until you mouse over it, at which points the ads become clear. It's a creative solution to the ad-supported model and, assuming you're running DeskTopTwo in full-screen or as a full-screen browser window, it doesn't get in the way of the icons on the desktop. It's called "Deals and Steals" and actually does highlight some interesting, often web-only deals.

On the desktop and in what looks a lot like Window's Start menu are a calendar application, RSS reader, message boards, instant messenger, MP3 player, web site editor and several other varyingly useful apps including a "Hard Drive" which functions as a file upload / download utility. There doesn't seem to be an upload cap (we were able to upload a chunk of the Ubuntu 7.04 disc image file before tiring of the slow upload speed.

The inclusion of a full OpenOffice 2.0 suite makes this a compelling offering. However, the load time is bit much; understandably so, perhaps. However, the OpenOffice 2.0 components do seem a bit buggy and sometimes crash as soon as they finish loading. That said, the Sapotek team admits it's still working out a few issues... just in case the word "beta," prominent in the bottom right corner of the interface didn't tip users off.

DeskTopTwo feels a lot more like a cohesive desktop experience than some other offerings we've tried; things like the ability to move icons on the desktop, the ability to save files direct to

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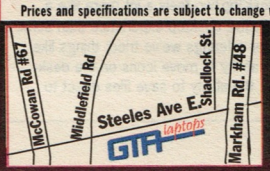

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with photos from around the world tagged "puppies."

YouOS does an excellent job of incorporating other online applications like Google Docs and Spreadsheets for working with, managing and sharing word processing documents, spreadsheets and the latest addition to the Google Docs online app. Also included is an image editor called YouPhotoshop, essentially a window displaying Pixenate, an online photo editor. Within this application, users can take care of common photo editing tasks like resizing, cropping and rotating images along with buttons to level horizons in the frame, manage colours, brightness and contrast, auto-enhance images (with generally impressive results), sepia tone images and apply other image effects. Once finished editing, users can upload directly to Flickr or save to the desktop... the actual desktop, that is, not the online one.

Other applications that are of questionable worth productivity wise but that are invaluable when looking for some entertainment online include a link to every episode of South Park up to season 11 and a modified Super Mario World game, both of which run within the YouOS desktop environment.

SSOE

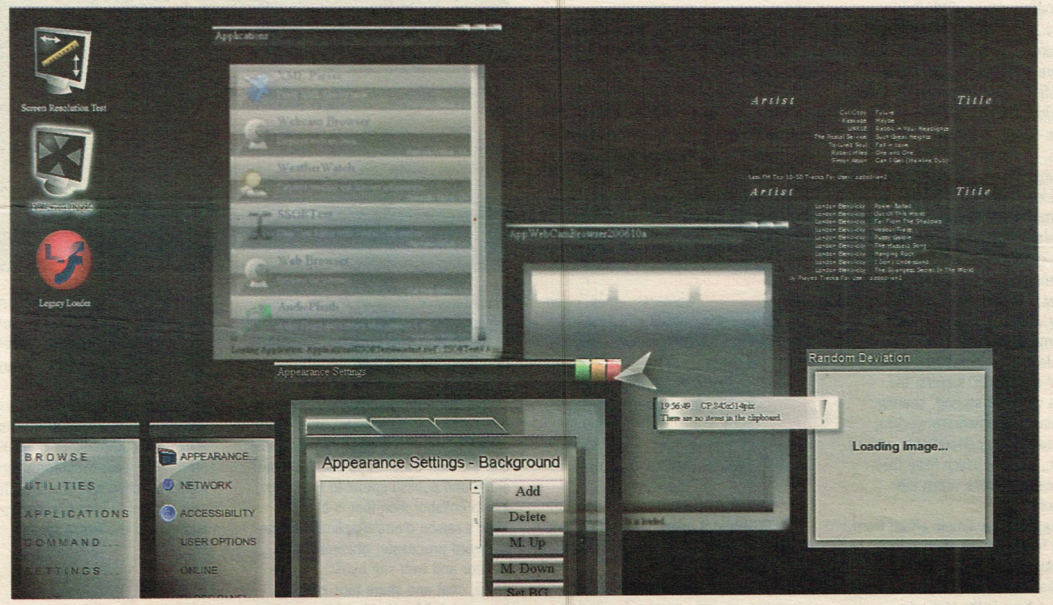
giffard.dynalias.net/ssoe/
What's available: Weather watch, audio player, web cam browser, XML parser, plain text editor and a little more
Closest to: A shinier WebTV
Switch? No
Speed: Slow
Platforms tested and working (sort of): Firefox 2.0.0.7, Internet Explorer 7.0.5370.11
Requirements: Adobe Flash
Space: None
Cost: None

Right from the get-go, presented with the option to launch either the "semi-stable" or the "unstable" versions, you'll know something's up. This is essentially a hobby project by Christopher Giffard and an impressive one at that. However, if users approach it as anything other than a hobbyist project that's worth a look from a pure interest standpoint, they stand to be disappointed. Using the unstable version allows users to get a glimpse of features that may come along in the future, including a GameMachine and a simple chess game. Good for a bit of novelty, it's more an alpha than a beta; interesting for its achievement but not in a truly usable state.

From an pure hobbyist standpoint though, it's interesting to poke around and see one man's vision of what an online OS could be. A quick word of advice though; when creating a system that is heavy on the graphic eye candy, back it up with some usable and useful applications. As a tech demo, it's worth a look. As a usable online operating system though, your time is better spent elsewhere.

By Andrew Moore-Crispin

SSOE



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your online "hard drive" from the various desktop applications and, once the initial and somewhat slow initial load is done, near offline desktop performance.

eyeOS

www.eyeos.org
What's available: File manager, word processor, music player, calendar, notepad, contacts manager, file sharer, group manager, group board
Closest to: Ubuntu
Switch? Maybe not switch but definitely use
Speed: Reasonable with public servers, great with eyeOS server and a decent connection
Platforms tested and working: Firefox 2.0.0.7, Internet Explorer 7.0.5370.11
Requirements: Adobe Flash
Space: Unspecified
Cost: Donation driven, GNU Public License (v.3)

Anyone familiar with navigating in graphic user interface Linux operating systems will feel right at home with eyeOS; not only does it carry over the community-driven design and open source software idea, it also brings a lot of the same navigation principals that are found in Linux installs.

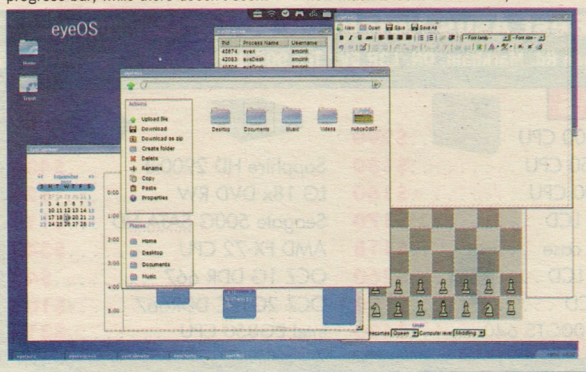
At the time of testing, the load times were painfully slow when using the hosted system. However, during other periods, the online OS was snappy and responsive, bringing up requested programs with just a few seconds loading time.

On the clean and uncluttered desktop sit "home" and "trash" folders; the former is used for storing, sharing, downloading and otherwise working with saved files like documents, videos and music, each of which have their own dedicated folders within the larger whole.

Uploading files is a simple affair; from the home folder, users choose the eyeOS folder they wish to upload to, navigate to the file and hit upload. One major issue here is the lack of a progress bar; while there doesn't seem to be a cap on the size of files to be uploaded, you're never quite sure whether the file you're trying to send up is actually moving or not; it's not a big deal with the near instant uploads of smaller files (tested with a 198KB JPG file) but it certainly is with larger files (tested using the 697MB Ubuntu 7.04 disc image file, ubuntu-7.04-desktop-i386.iso)

When opening folders within eyeOS, a taskbar appears below the desktop for easily switching between applications or folders. At the top of the desktop sits a launcher, broken down in to Office, Network, Accessories, Games, System and Places folders. Within these categories, you'll find a simple word processor (eyeDocs), a calendar (eyeCalendar), simple chess game, RSS reader, group message board and even a Windows-esque task manager to kill non-responsive programs.

Development seems to have slowed somewhat but if the open source community devotes some attention to eyeOS, it's got a lot of potential. The inclusion of a free server-based eyeOS that users can easily install on a server and open up to internal collaboration and workflow management makes eyeOS a compelling, scalable and configurable option.



Glide

www.glidedigital.com
What's available: Contacts, email, calendar, photo editing, word processing, presentations, web publishing, music, video and more
Closest to: Palm OS, strangely
Switch? Switch? no. Augment? sure.
Speed: Quick
Platforms tested and working: Firefox 2.0.0.7, Internet Explorer 7.0.5370.11
Requirements: Adobe Flash
Space: 2GB, 10GB+
Cost: 2GB and 4 users, free, 10GB and 24 users, US$4.95/mo., US$49.95/year

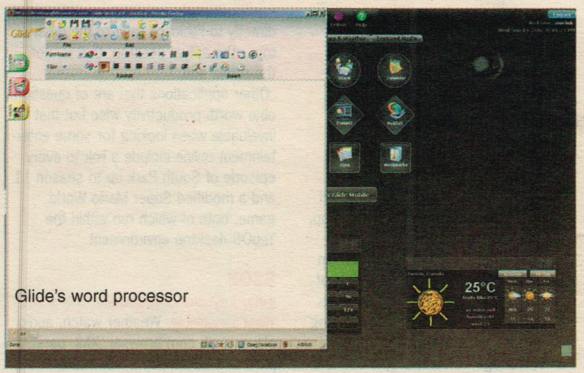
When you first make it in to the Glide interface, you may be struck with just how much it looks like a Palm, BlackBerry or Windows Mobile operating environment; big icons in the middle of the screen that serve as application launchers and headings.

Titles like Write for word processing, Crunch for number crunching, Present for creating presentations, an email inbox, contacts management, calendar and the like. Other apps such as chat, share and publish speak to the online group collaboration that is clearly Glide's raison d'etre. Applications like the word processor, presentation creator and web site publisher have email, chat and share tabs running down the left-hand side of the application window to facilitate online collaboration between groups in the same office or around the globe.

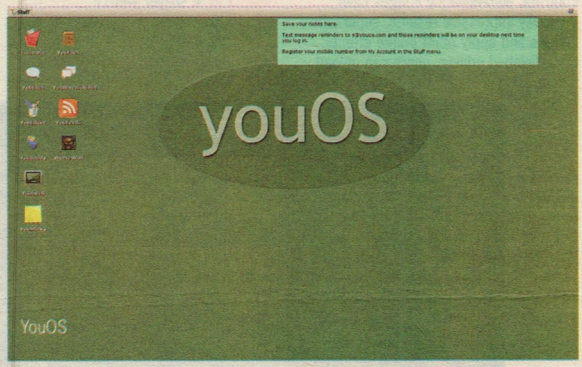
Across the top of the Glide desktop are mini-apps that open within the desktop environment as opposed to launching in a new window. The internet radio, weather and RSS feeds are the most interesting applets. There's also a functional calculator for doing quick equations.

Perhaps the biggest draw here is being able to access the same desktop applications, communications and collaboration whether at your desk or on the road; an impressive list of supported devices that can interact with a mobile version of the Glide OS allows users, ideally with a QWERTY keypad device though it's not technically necessary, to connect to their desktop remotely and interact with the content on it. It works like a charm and ensures always-available access to your content.

A downloadable application that's available in Mac, PC and Linux flavours allows for automatic or manual synchronization of files, minimizing version control headaches and ensuring that people with access to files are always seeing and editing the latest version.



Glide's word processor



YouOS

www.youos.com
What's available: Chat, Flickr integration, Google Docs, photo editor, RSS reader, sticky notes, customizations and more
Closest to: Amiga
Switch? No
Speed: Fast
Platforms tested and working: Firefox 2.0.0.7, Internet Explorer 7.0.5370.11
Requirements: Java
Space: 250MB
Cost: None

YouOS seems a more entertainment-oriented online operating systems. There's a word processor present and accounted for but that's really about it from a productivity standpoint. Instead, there's a fully fleshed out chat module, Flickr integration (that, incidentally, starts off

The fall feast of colours

Changing seasons means new photographic opportunities

There's nothing quite like the changing colours of autumn leaves to inspire beginning and seasoned photographers alike. Photographing fall colours provides an opportunity to use a wide variety of techniques both in the field and in your image editor.

Field work

Close-ups: that maple tree with its brilliant red leaves is sure to make an engaging photo, but consider alternatives to photographing the whole tree. Individual leaves normally don't hold too much interest unless you are a botanist or graphic artist, but leaves that have changed colours make great general subjects either individually or in small groups. The function of a close up is to isolate an object or detail, so keep your eyes open for potential close up treatments. When most of the leaves have fallen, you might take an interesting shot of that single brave one still clinging to the branch, or one that's blown onto a boardwalk. Even leaf fragments can make interesting studies in geometry.

Selective focus: another method to isolate a subject is to use selective focus. By using a long telephoto setting and/or a large aperture, you can control the parts of your composition that are in sharp focus. Your main subject – say a cluster of red leaves – will be in sharp focus while the out of focus background – maybe a grove of trees that is still essentially green – will accentuate your subject.

Backlight: if you've ever walked beneath a canopy of trees you may have noticed how much more saturated and brilliant the colours are when they are backlit by the sun. Capturing that with your camera is a sure way to get your colours to pop. It will also give the leaves a translucent quality and help reveal details of their intricate structure.

Figure-ground: plants are so common that they often become invisible parts of our surroundings. When the leaves turn colour however, you can't help but notice. You should be ready with your camera when you encounter those little surprises.

Image editing

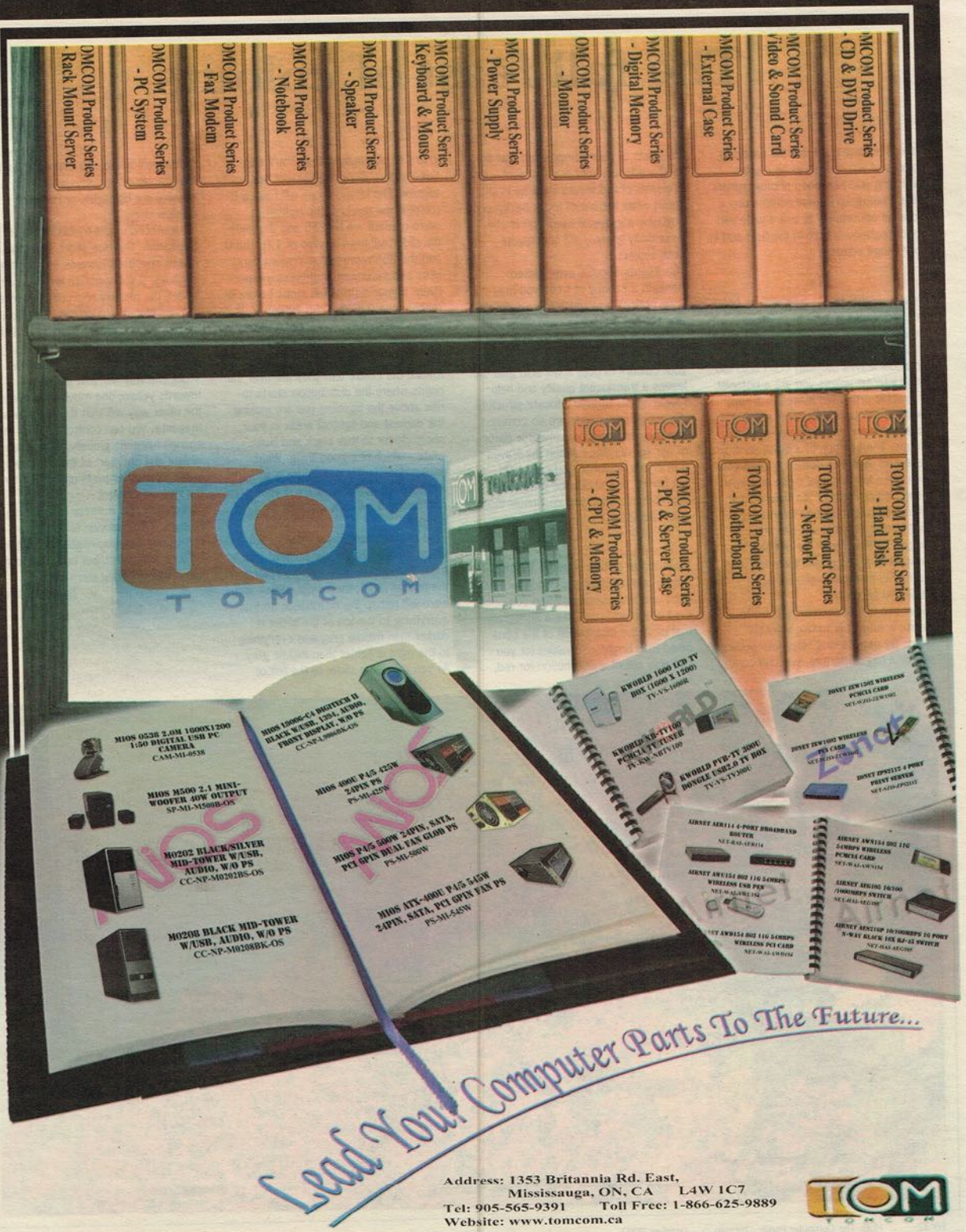
Most image editing software includes a Levels tool and this is a good place to start with most photos. When you open the Levels tool, you'll see a histogram that plots the distribution of the combined RGB brightness values (or you can also select a distribution for red, green or blue individually). You'll see three sliders along the base of the histogram. The leftmost one will have a 0 (zero) in the readout, the rightmost one's readout will be 255 and the middle slider will have a value of 1.0. The 0 and the 255 represent maximum darkness and maximum brightness, respectively. If your distribution stops before it reaches the 0 or the 255 extremes, it means the darkest and lightest values in your photo aren't as dark or as light as they could be. By moving the sliders toward the centre until they are near the points where the distribution starts to rise above the baseline you are making the darkest and lightest areas in your photo closer to true black and true white – which is a good thing. What you've done in this procedure is to increase the dynamic range in your photo, and it will look snappier as a result.

The middle slider has a value of 1.0, which represents the mid-point of your tonal distribution. Wherever you place the middle slider, the image editing software will remap the distribution so that everything to the left of the slider is darker than middle grey and everything to the right is lighter than middle grey. As you move the slider to the left or right, you'll be able to make the photo look lighter or darker overall without blowing out highlights or or losing shadow detail.

The second useful tool is Hue / Saturation. The Hue slider shifts the colour spectrum towards its neighbouring hues. If you visualize an RGB colour wheel, the primary and complementary colours placed around the wheel would be red, yellow, green, cyan, blue and magenta. If you are trying to adjust the reds in your photo, moving the Hue slider one way will shift the reds towards yellow, and moving the slider the other way will shift the reds toward magenta. You can control whether the change happens globally, or you can isolate just one part of the spectrum, leaving the other parts untouched by the Hue adjustment.

Saturation can increase the vibrancy of colours. If you happen to shoot on a dull cloudy day, you might find that your colours are muted, but bumping up the saturation will bring them back.

By David Tanaka



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Are we there yet?

Not quite. Tech innovations we'd like to see

It could be argued we live in privileged times when it comes to technological advancements: 50-inch wall-mounted televisions capable of displaying hundreds of channels; laptops that have more processing power than what Apollo 11 used to get to the moon; and, a little ol' thing called the Internet that offers a world of information, entertainment and communication at our fingertips.

But we still have not yet reached true tech nirvana. After all, we're still toiling over complicated computers, having trouble copying music and video over to portable media players, and, while our phones seem to have everything but the kitchen sink, we still struggle to place a simple call because of teeny buttons.

And so here is a look at a few tech innovations that should hurry up and arrive already.

Talk to me, baby

Computer keyboards and mice might do an okay job, but nothing is more natural to use than the human voice. And so many are waiting for a voice-activated operating system that lets you talk to your PC in plain English and hear responses in a pleasant (okay, sexy) voice. How cool would it be to walk into a room and ask your computer "What time is it?" while you leaf through a newspaper? Or, "Computer, what is the weather like outside?" as you roll out of bed. Or, "Tell me the highest-rated Indian restaurant on Queen Street West?" Imagine being able to play your favourite music, TV show or movie by simply asking for it by name.

Where we're at: Products such as Nuance's Dragon Naturally Speaking 9 ($129.99; www.nuance.com/naturallyspeaking/) offer voice-to-text transcription, therefore you can "type" a document or email simply by speaking. They can also let you use your voice to navigate around the web instead of typing and clicking. A similar technology from Nuance for supported cellphones is called Voice Control, available through select carriers such as Rogers

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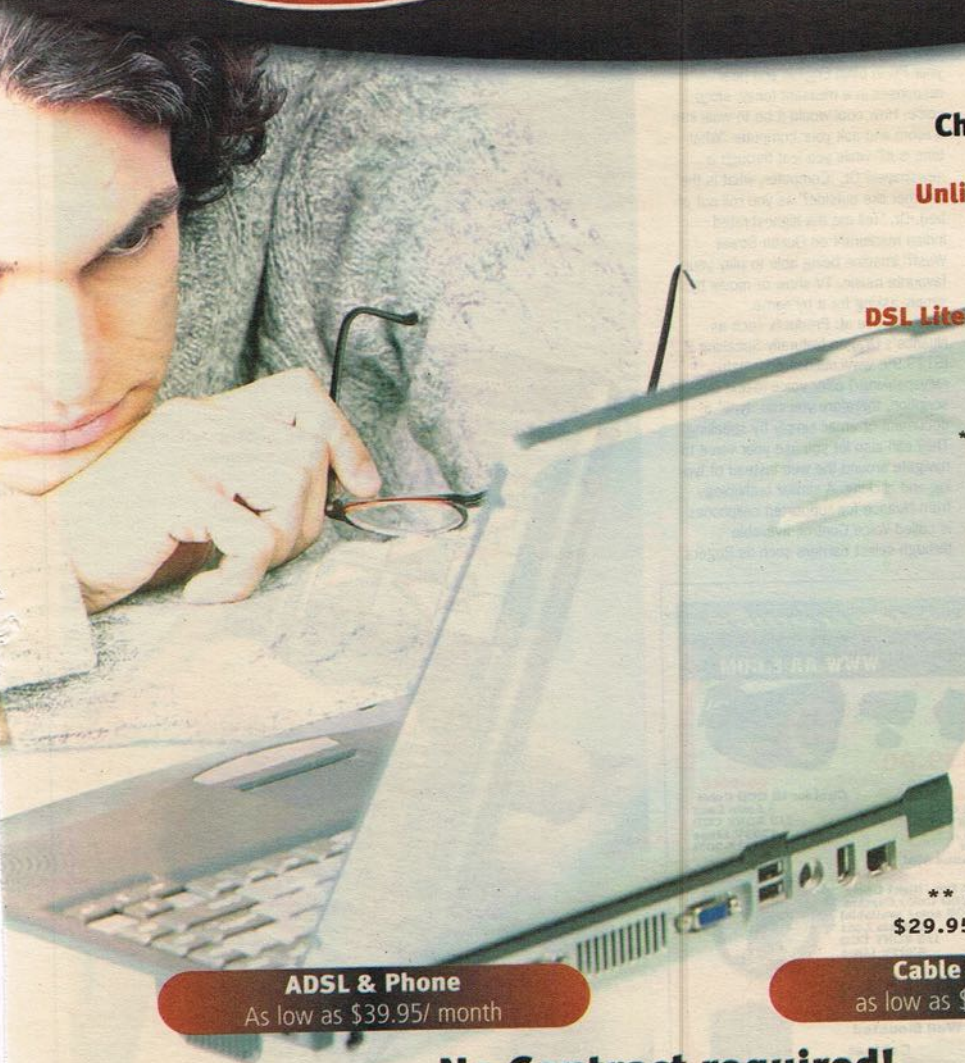

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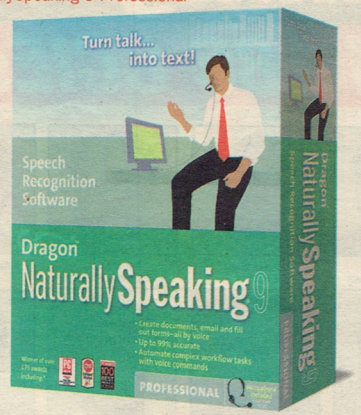


Wireless ($6 a month; www.rogers.com/nuance).

Wham spam

Spam is still the bane of our email existence.

This unsolicited, unwanted junk mail continues to pollute inboxes with everything from medical solutions for erectile dysfunction to promises of large sums of cash in an African bank. In fact, IronPort Systems, a division at U.S. telecom outfit Cisco Systems, has just confirmed a whopping 83 percent of all email is now spam, twice what it was just a year ago. Junk mail now accounts for between 60 billion and 150 billion messages – per day – and contributes to the growing problem of Internet congestion. Microsoft co-founder and chairman Bill Gates once predicted spam would be eradicated, but it's getting worse instead of better.

Where we're at: While some companies are getting better at filtering and segregating spam, such as the latest Microsoft Outlook email program, others are designing ways of barring it from your inbox altogether. Software such as DigiPortal Software's ChoiceMail (Free to try, US$39.95 to buy; www.digiportal.com) is one of the growing "challenge-response" solutions that blocks everyone out of your inbox unless: a) they're already in your address book; or b) the sender is willing to take the time to type in some numbers and letters when the email bounces back initially, in order to prove they're a real person and not a spamming program.

A true "all in one" device

Sure, we've got so-called smart phones that can take photos, but the pictures are often so blurry they look like they were taken underwater. And yes, many phones can play music, but storage remains an issue (expandable phone memory tops 2GB, yet the latest iPods are 160GB), not to mention the battery suffers when you use your camera for music, shooting video and so forth. The point is, if you want a digital Swiss Army knife today, there's a serious trade-off when it comes to quality, memory and battery life.

How amazing would it be to have one pocket-sized device that truly does it all, and well? One day, and hopefully soon, our phone will be our high-definition camcorder, stereo system and high-speed Internet connection that lets you use VoIP services, such as Skype, for free calls over the Net.

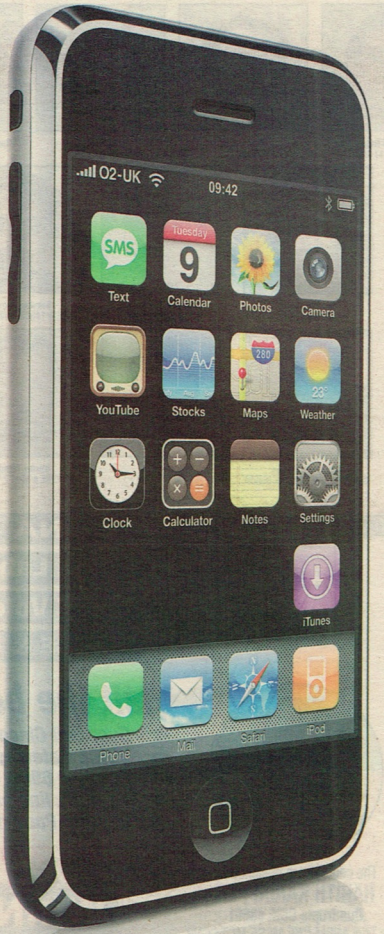
Where we're at: Though it's not available in Canada just yet, the much-hyped iPhone (US$399; www.apple.com) does a good job at organizing and playing your media, but it offers only 8GB of storage, which isn't much - especially when you're talking about high-quality, two-hour films.

Similarly, a small handful of phones take decent photos, such as the Sony Ericsson K790a ($179.99 with 36-month Rogers Wireless plan; www.sonyericsson.com) with its 3.2MP camera, but when printed, photos could still look grainy. Perhaps in time we'll have the do-it-all device with no trade-offs.

What would you like to see? A flying car? An electronic newspaper you can roll up (with video and WiFi)? A laptop with enough battery power to last a few days, like your cellphone? Email us at letters@ppublishing.ca.

By Marc Saltzman

Apple iPhone



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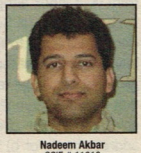
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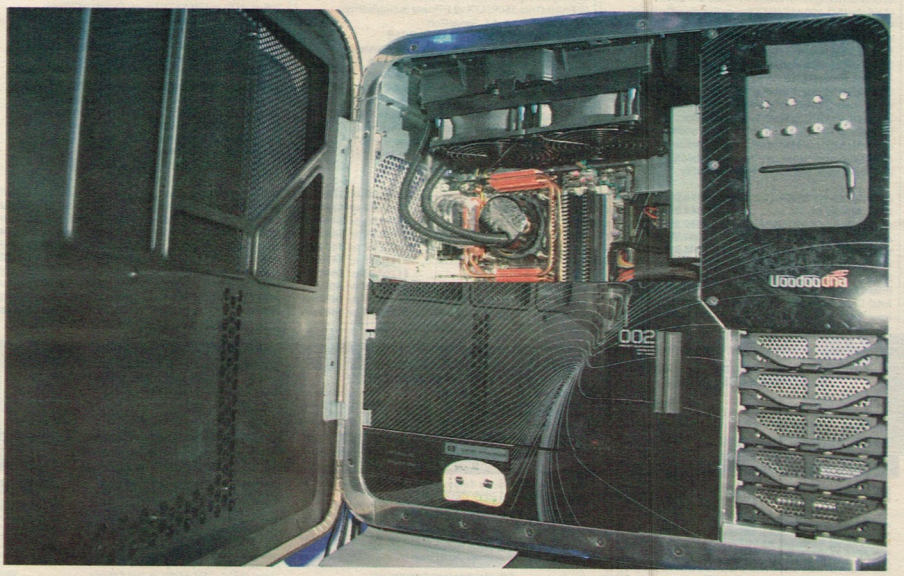
HP Blackbird 002

A dark horse arrives on the luxury PC scene



HP's annual product showcase in New York City last month put the electronics manufacturer's slim and sexy laptops and mobile devices in the limelight, but the product that stole the show was the Blackbird 002—a massive, 80-pound desktop PC.

The first official product borne out of HP's acquisition of Calgary-based luxury computer manufacturer Voodoo PC—a company known for premium gear priced in the tens of thousands of dollars—Blackbird is a stunningly advanced, powerful and elegant piece of machinery.

HP's chief technology officer Phil McKinney and Voodoo founder/head of HP gaming Rahul Sood stood over the machine, manufactured and assembled in Alberta, like proud parents as they showed it to journalists for the first time just hours prior to its official unveiling.

The Blackbird's chassis is a single cast piece of aluminium painted matte black on its front and top grills and polished to a mirror shine along its interior side edges. The entire unit is suspended on a metal pedestal, allowing air to enter the box from beneath the tower to cool its high powered innards—what Sood calls "a sixth side of air cooling—an industry first."

The machine is loaded with the sort of plush extras that Voodoo is renowned for, including an LED light on the back of the box that illuminates the machine's jack pack for easy cable alterations, a hydraulic powered pop up panel on top of the machine that houses a bevy of quick access ports and a swinging VESA mount on the right side of the tower to which users can attach a variety of peripherals, such as LCD screens and game controllers.

Pop off the stylishly-designed side door and a gleaming interior loaded with the most decadent of PC components is exposed, including a proprietary-liquid cooling system that keeps the machine dead silent even while running the most resource hungry software, and a monstrous 1.1 kilowatt power supply designed to ensure that the computer's power hungry hardware is well fed (a green machine the Blackbird is not).

Users have the ability to order the machine to precise specifications, choosing between factory over-clocked AMD and Intel quad-core processors and the latest graphics boards from either Intel or Nvidia. Users can also select whether they'd like to add a Blu-ray, HD-DVD or dual format high definition optical drive next to the two slot

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PREMIER CHOICE BRONZE

- ECS P4M900T-M for Intel Socket 775 CPUs or ECS GeForce6100SM-M for AMD SocketAM2 CPUs
- Mitsumi 3.5" - 1.44MB HD Floppy Disk Drive
- Seagate 80GbATA-100 Hard Disk Drive @ 7200RPM
- 1Gb DDR2 667Mhz RAM Memory (1x 1Gb)
- Economy Beige Mid-Tower 7 BayATX Case
- NSpire ISO-500 450WATX Power Supply w/Dual Fan
- 4- USB Ports, 1- 16550 Serial Port, 1 PS/2 Mouse Port & 1- Bi-Directional Parallel Port
- On-Board PCI-Express 3D Video w/ 64Mb Buffer
- On-board 6-Channel Digital Surround Sound
- Rockwell 56K Int. Voice/Fax/Modem v.92 (PCI)
- On-Board 10/100 PCI Full Duplex NetworkAdapter
- Fifty-Two Speed (52X) Max EIDE CD-ROM Drive
- Viewsonic VA703b Black 17" LCD Monitor
- Keytronic 104 Enhanced Soft-Touch Keyboard
- Logitech S-100 Speaker System
- Nspire Optical PS/2 Mouse w/ Mouse Pad
- MS Windows Vista Home Basic 64-bit OEM
- **5 Years Labour & 1 Year Parts Warranty**

AMD Sempron 3600+	**$599.99 or $22/mth**
AMD Athlon 64 3800+	**$629.99 or $23/mth**
AMD Athlon 64 x2 6000+	**$749.99 or $28/mth**
Intel Celeron D 440	**$629.99 or $23/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E2180	**$664.99 or $25/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E4400	**$699.99 or $26/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6320	**$744.99 or $28/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6420	**$759.99 or $28/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6600	**$799.99 or $30/mth**

PREMIER CHOICE SILVER

- Asus M2V Motherboard for AMD SocketAM2 or Asus P5LD2 R2 Motherboard for Intel Socket 775
- Mitsumi 3.5" - 1.44MB HD Floppy Disk Drive
- WDC 160Gb SATA2/300 Hard Disk Drive w/ 8Mb
- 1Gb DDR2 667Mhz RAM Memory (1x 1Gb)
- Chenbro Beige Mid-TowerATX Case w/ 7 Bays
- NSpire ISQ-500 450WATX Power Supply w/Dual Fan
- 8- USB Ports, 1- Printer & 1- Serial Port
- Asus EN6200TC512/TD w/256Mb (PCI-Express)
- LG GSA-H54N DVD-RW Drive w/ Software
- On-board 6-Channel Digital Surround Sound
- Altec Lansing BX1021 w/ 2 Speakers & Subwoofer
- Rockwell 56K Int. Voice/Fax/Modem v.92 (PCI)
- On-Board Gigabit Full Duplex NetworkAdapter
- Viewsonic VA903b Black 19" LCD Monitor
- Keytronic 104 Enhanced Soft-Touch Keyboard
- Logitech Optical Mouse w/ Wheel w/ Mouse Pad
- MS Windows Vista Home Premium 64-bit OEM
- **5 Years Labour & 1 Year Parts Warranty**

AMD Sempron 3600+	**$814.99 or $30/mth**
AMD Athlon 64-3800+	**$844.99 or $31/mth**
AMD Athlon 64 x2 4200+	**$869.99 or $32/mth**
AMD Athlon 64 x2 6000+	**$964.99 or $36/mth**
Intel Celeron D 440	**$844.99 or $31/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E2180	**$879.99 or $32/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E4400	**$914.99 or $34/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6320	**$959.99 or $35/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6420	**$974.99 or $36/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6600	**$1014.99 or $37/mth**

PREMIER CHOICE GOLD

- Asus M2N-E Motherboard for AMD SocketAM2 or Asus P5K Motherboard for Intel Socket 775
- Mitsumi 3.5" - 1.44MB HD Floppy Disk Drive
- WDC 320Gb SATA2/300 Hard Drive Drive w/ 16Mb
- 1Gb DDR2 667Mhz RAM Memory (1x 1Gb)
- Enlight Beige Mid-TowerATX Case w/ 7 Bays
- EnlightTrue 350WATX v2.0 Power Supply w/ Fan
- 8- USB Ports and 1- Serial Port
- Asus EN8500GT Silent w/ 512Mb, PCI-E
- Pioneer DVR-112 DVD-RW Drive w/ Software
- On-board 8-Channel Digital Surround Sound
- Logitech X-530 w/ 5 Speakers & Subwoofer
- Rockwell 56K Int. Voice/Fax/Modem v.92 (PCI)
- On-Board Gigabit Full Duplex NetworkAdapter
- Viewsonic VX2035wm 20" Digital Wide LCD Monitor
- Keytronic 104 Enhanced Soft-Touch Keyboard
- Microsoft Wheel Mouse Optical Mouse w/ Pad
- MS Windows Vista Business 64-bit OEM
- **5 Years Labour & 1 Year Parts Warranty**

AMD Sempron 3600+	**$1069.99 or $39/mth**
AMD Athlon 64-3800+	**$1099.99 or $40/mth**
AMD Athlon 64 x2 4200+	**$1114.99 or $41/mth**
AMD Athlon 64 x2 4600+	**$1219.99 or $45/mth**
Intel Celeron D 440	**$1139.99 or $42/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E2180	**$1174.99 or $43/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E4400	**$1209.99 or $44/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6320	**$1254.99 or $46/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6600	**$1309.99 or $48/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6750	**$1299.99 or $48/mth**

PREMIER CHOICE BLACK

- Asus P5N32-E SLI Plus Motherboard for Intel S.775 or Asus M2N32-SLI/Premium VE for AMD SocketAM2
- Mitsumi 3.5" - 1.44MB Black Floppy Disk Drive
- WDC 500Gb SATA2/300 Hard Drive Drive w/ 16Mb
- 2Gb DDR2 667Mhz RAM Memory (2x 1Gb)
- Enlight Black Mid-TowerATX Case w/ 7 Bays
- EnlightTrue 450WATX Power Supply w/ 2 Fans
- Asus EN8800GTS w/ 320Mb & Video Out, PCI-E
- Sony 710OA Black 20X DVD-RW w/ Software
- Sony 16X Black DVD-ROM Drive w/ 48X CDROM
- On-board 8-Channel Digital Surround Sound
- Creative Inspire P7800 w/ 7 Speakers & Subwoofer
- US Robotics 56K Internal Fax/Modem v.90 (PCI)
- On-Board Dual Gigabit Full Duplex NetworkAdapter
- AcerAL2216WBD 22" Digital Wide LCD Monitor
- Keytronic KT800 104 Black Soft-Touch Keyboard
- Logitech Optical Mouse w/ Wheel w/ Mouse Pad
- MS Windows Vista Ultimate 64-bit OEM
- **5 Years Labour & 1 Year Parts Warranty**

AMD Sempron 3600+	**$1604.99 or $54/mth**
AMD Athlon 64-3800+	**$1634.99 or $55/mth**
AMD Athlon 64 x2 4200+	**$1649.99 or $55/mth**
AMD Athlon 64 x2 6000+	**$1754.99 or $59/mth**
Intel Celeron D 440	**$1604.99 or $54/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E2180	**$1639.99 or $55/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E4400	**$1674.99 or $56/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6320	**$1719.99 or $57/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6600	**$1774.99 or $59/mth**
Intel Core 2 Duo E6750	**$1764.99 or $59/mth**

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AMD Retail CPU w/ Fan	3000+	see web
Asus M2N Motherboard	3200+	see web
512Mb DDR2 Ram, 667Mhz	3500+	see web
Enlight Mid-Tower w/ Nspire 450W	3800+	see web

PREMIER PENTIUM UPGRADE BUNDLE

Intel Retail Pentium CPU w/ Fan	D440	see web
Asus P5LD2 R2 Motherboard	E2160	see web
512Mb DDR2 Ram, 667Mhz	E2180	see web
Enlight Mid-Tower w/ Nspire 450W	E4400	see web

PREMIER ATHLON 64 X2 UPGRADE BUNDLE

AMD Retail Athlon 64 CPU w/ Fan	3500+	see web
Asus M2N-E Motherboard	4200+	see web
1Gb DDR2 Ram, 667Mhz	4600+	see web
Enlight Mid-Tower w/ Enlight 350W	6000+	see web

PREMIER CORE 2 DUO UPGRADE BUNDLE

Intel Retail Core 2 Duo CPU w/ Fan	E6320	see web
Asus P5K Motherboard	E6550	see web
1Gb DDR2 Ram, 667Mhz	E6750	see web
Enlight Mid-Tower w/ Enlight 450W	E6850	see web

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- AMD Athlon 64 3800+ (Socket AM2) BOX ..... see web
- AMD Athlon 64 x2 BE-2300 (Socket AM2) BOX ..... see web
- AMD Athlon 64 x2 BE-2350 (Socket AM2) BOX ..... see web
- AMD Athlon 64 x2 4200+ (Socket AM2) BOX (65W) ..... see web
- AMD Athlon 64 x2 4400+ (Socket AM2) BOX (65W) ..... see web
- AMD Athlon 64 x2 4800+ (Socket AM2) BOX (65W) ..... see web
- AMD Athlon 64 x2 4800+ (Socket AM2) BOX (65W) ..... see web
- AMD Athlon 64 x2 5000+ (Socket AM2) BOX (65W) ..... see web
- AMD Athlon 64 x2 5600+ (Socket AM2) BOX ..... see web
- AMD Athlon 64 x2 6000+ (Socket AM2) BOX ..... see web
- AMD Athlon 64 x2 6400+ (Socket AM2) BOX ..... see web
- AMD Opteron 180 (Socket 939) BOX ..... see web
- Intel Celeron D 420 (1.6Ghz) Socket 775 x64 ..... see web
- Intel Celeron D 430 (1.8Ghz) Socket 775 x64 ..... see web
- Intel Celeron D 440 (2.0Ghz) Socket 775 x64 ..... see web
- Intel Pentium D 925 (Socket 775) 3.0Ghz/4Mb x64 ..... see web
- Intel Pentium Duo Core E2140 (Socket 775) 1.60Ghz ..... see web
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- Intel Core 2 Duo E4500 (Socket 775) 2.20Ghz/800Mhz ..... see web
- Intel Core 2 Duo E6320 (Socket 775) 1.86Ghz/1066Mhz ..... see web
- Intel Core 2 Duo E6420 (Socket 775) 2.13Ghz/1066Mhz ..... see web
- Intel Core 2 Duo E6600 (Socket 775) 2.40Ghz/1066Mhz ..... see web
- Intel Core 2 Duo E6750 (Socket 775) 2.67Ghz/1333Mhz ..... see web
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- Intel Core 2 Quad Q6600 (Socket 775) 2.4Ghz ..... see web
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- 256 MB, DDR PC3200 (400Mhz) ..... see web
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- 1 GB, DDR PC3200 (400Mhz) ..... see web
- 512 MB, DDR2 PC5400 (667Mhz) ..... see web
- 1 GB, DDR2 PC5400 (667Mhz) ..... see web
- Corsair TWINX 2Gb PC3200C2 Dual Channel Kit ..... see web
- Corsair TWIN2X 2Gb PC5400 Dual Channel Kit ..... see web
- Corsair TWIN2X 2Gb PC6400 Dual Channel Kit ..... see web
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- OCZ 4Gb PC6400 Vista Dual Channel Kit ..... see web

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- Asus A8N32-SLI Premium, Socket 939, nForce4 (ATX) SLI $199.99
- Asus A8V-E SE, Socket 939, Via K8T890 (ATX) $49.99
- Asus A8V-E XE, Socket 939, Via K8T890 (ATX) $254.99
- Asus Crosshair, Socket AM2, nForce 590 SLI MCP (ATX) SLI $249.99
- Asus M2NBP-VM CSM, Socket AM2, nForce 430h (mATX) $84.99
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- Asrock 4CoreDual-VSTA, LGA775, Via PT880Pro/Ultra(ATX) $74.99
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- BFG 7300GT w/ 512Mb (AGP) Video Out $124.99
- BFG 7600GS w/ 256Mb (AGP) Video Out $159.99
- Sapphire Radeon 9550 w/ 256Mb (AGP) Video Out $59.99
- Sapphire Radeon X1650 w/ 512Mb (AGP) Video Out $89.99
- Sapphire Radeon X1950Pro w/ 512Mb (AGP) Video Out $199.99

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- Asus Extreme EN7500GS Silent HTD w/ 512Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $99.99
- Asus Extreme EN8500GT TOP Silent w/ 512Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $159.99
- Asus Extreme EN8600GT w/ 256Mb (PCI-E) Video $139.99
- Asus Extreme EN8600GTS-N w/ 256Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $194.99
- Asus Extreme EN8600GTS TOP 256Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $229.99
- Asus Extreme EN8800GTS w/ 320Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $329.99
- Asus Extreme EN8800GTS w/ 640Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $414.99
- Asus Extreme EN8800Ultra w/ 768Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $634.99
- Asus Extreme EN8800Ultra w/ 768Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $714.99
- ATI Radeon HD 2900XT w/ 512Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $464.99
- BFG Geforce 8500GT w/ 256Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $99.99
- BFG Geforce 8600GT OC w/ 256Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $159.99
- BFG Geforce 8600GTS OC w/ 256Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $219.99
- BFG Geforce 8600GTS OC2 w/ 320Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $344.99
- BFG Geforce 8800GTS OC2 w/ 640Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $434.99
- BFG Geforce 8800GTS OC2 w/ 768Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $599.99
- BFG Geforce 8800Ultra w/ 768Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $749.99
- BFG Geforce 8800Ultra OC w/ 768Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $844.99
- Sapphire X1050 w/ 128Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $44.99
- Sapphire X1300 w/ 512Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $69.99
- Sapphire X1550 w/ 512Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $74.99
- Sapphire X1650 w/ 512Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $79.99
- Sapphire X1650Pro Ultimate Edition w/ 256Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $154.99
- Sapphire X1950GT w/ 256Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $159.99
- Sapphire X1950Pro w/ 512Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $179.99
- Sapphire HD2400Pro w/ 256Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $69.99
- Sapphire HD2400XT w/ 256Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $84.99
- Sapphire HD2600Pro w/ 512Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $129.99
- Sapphire HD2600XT w/ 256Mb DDR3 (PCI-E) Video Out $114.99
- Sapphire HD2600XT w/ 256Mb DDR4 (PCI-E) Video Out $159.99
- Sapphire HD2900XT w/ 512Mb (PCI-E) Video Out $424.99

Full List of Video Cards Available Online

- ATI TV Wonder 200 PCI $54.99
- ATI TV Wonder 650 - TV Tuner $134.99
- Sapphire Theatrix 650 Pro TV Tuner (Lite) $79.99

Premier Hard Drives & Storage

- Seagate 80GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 2Mb $49.99
- Seagate 160GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8Mb $59.99
- Seagate 250GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb $69.99
- Seagate 320GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb $84.99
- Seagate 400GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb ..... Q $109.99
- Seagate 500GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb ..... Q $119.99
- Seagate 750GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb ..... Q $229.99
- WD 80GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8Mb $49.99
- WD 160GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8Mb $59.99
- WD 250GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8Mb $69.99
- WD 320GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8Mb $79.99
- WD 500GB ATA/100 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb ..... Q $119.99

Serial ATA Hard Disk Drives

- Hitachi 1TB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 32Mb ..... Q $369.99
- Seagate 80GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8Mb $49.99
- Seagate 160GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8Mb $59.99
- Seagate 250GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb $69.99
- Seagate 320GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb $79.99
- Seagate 400GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb $109.99
- Seagate 500GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb $119.99
- Seagate 750GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb ..... Q $229.99
- WD 36GB SATA/150 10000RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb $114.99
- WD 74GB SATA/150 10000RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb $159.99
- WD 150GB SATA/150 10000RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb $299.99
- WD 160GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 8Mb $59.99
- WD 250GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb $69.99
- WD 320GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb $79.99
- WD 400GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb ..... Q $109.99
- WD 500GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 15Mb $119.99
- WD 500GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb RE ..... Q $169.99
- WD 750GB SATA/300 7200RPM Hard Drive w/ 16Mb ..... Q $249.99

Notebook Hard Disks Drives (2.5")

- Fujitsu 80GB ATA 5400RPM Hard Drive w/ 2Mb $69.99
- Fujitsu 100GB ATA 5400RPM Hard Drive w/ 8Mb $79.99
- Fujitsu 120GB ATA 5400RPM Hard Drive w/ 8Mb $84.99

Full List of Hard Drive Brands Available Online

- Mitsumi 1.44Mb Floppy Disk Drive (Black or Beige) $9.99
- Mitsumi 1.44Mb Floppy & 7-in-1 Card Reader (Black or Beige) $29.99
- Sony 1.44Mb Floppy Drive (USB) $24.99
- Promise Ultra133 TX2 Controller Card (PCI) $29.99
- Promise SATA2/300 TX4 Controller Card (PCI) $79.99
- Vantec UGT-ST400 SATA/300 Controller Card (PCI Express) $44.99

Premier Optical Drives

- Sony 52X CD-ROM Drive (Beige) $14.99
- Sony 16X DVD-ROM Drive (Beige/Black) $19.99
- LiteOn 16X DVD-ROM Drive (Black) Serial-ATA $24.99

Full List of Drives Available Online

- LG GSA-H54N (18x Dual Layer DVDsR/RW) (Beige/Black) $29.99
- LG GSA-H62N (18x Dual Layer DVDsR/RW) (Beige/Black) (SATA) $29.99
- LG GSA-H62L (18x Lightscribe DVDsR/RW) (Beige/Black) (SATA) $34.99
- Pioneer DVR-112 (18x Dual Layer DVDeR/RW) (Beige/Black/Slvr) $34.99
- Pioneer DVR-212 (18x Dual Layer DVDsR/RW) Serial ATA) $34.99
- Plextor PX-800A (18x Dual Layer DVDzR/RW) (Beige/Black) $74.99
- Plextor PX-810A (18x Dual Layer DVDsR/RW) (Serial ATA) $86.99
- Sony Optiarc 7190A (24x DVDzR/RW) (Beige/Black) (Parallel) ..... Q $34.99
- Sony Optiarc 7190S (20x DVDzR/RW) (Serial ATA ...) ..... Q $38.99

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Premier Soundcards

- Soundblaster Audigy X-Fi Xtreme (PCI) (OEM) $49.99
- Soundblaster Audigy X-Fi XtremeAudio (PCI) (Retail Box) $74.99
- Soundblaster Audigy X-Fi XtremeGamer (PCI) (Retail Box) $99.99
- Soundblaster Audigy X-Fi XtremeGamer Fatality (Retail Box) $129.99
- Soundblaster Audigy X-Fi Fatality Champion (PCI) (Retail Box) $184.99
- Soundblaster Audigy X-Fi Elite Pro 5SA(PCI) (Retail Box) $279.99

Premier Network Solutions

- D-Link 10/100Mbit Ethernet Card $9.99
- D-Link Gigabit Ethernet Card $24.99
- Asus WL-138G Wireless-G Ethernet Adapter $24.99
- Zio X9 Wireless-G PCI Ethernet Adapter $24.99
- Zio WLB5254USB Wireless-G USB Ethernet Adapter $29.99
- Linksys WMP54G - 802.11g Wireless Adapter PCI $59.99
- Linksys WPC54G - 802.11g Wireless Adapter PCMCIA $59.99
- Linksys WUSB54G - 802.11g Wireless Adapter USB $59.99
- Linksys PAP2-T - VOIP Adapter for most Providers $69.99

Cables, Ends and Adapters are Available Online

- SMC 10/100Mbit - 5 Port Switch $19.99
- Linksys BEFSR41 Cable/xDSL Router - 4 Port $84.99
- Linksys WRT54G Wireless 802.11g Router w/ 4 Port $59.99
- Linksys WRT54GL Wireless 802.11g Router w/ 4 Port (Linux) $69.99
- Linksys WRT300N Wireless 802.11n Router w/ 4 Port (D-Aft) $134.99
- Linksys WRV200 10/100 VPN Router w/ 4 Port $79.99
- Linksys RV042 10/100 VPN Router w/ 4 Port $164.99
- Zio WLB5254AIP Wireless 802.11g Router w/ 4 Port $34.99

Premier Cases & Power Supplies

- Economy Beige Mid Tower Case w/ 7 Drive Bays (ATX) $24.99
- Economy Black Mid Tower Case w/ 7 Drive Bays (ATX) (MC7799) $39.99

Full Line of Thermaltake & LianLi Available Online

- Antec NSK1300 Cube Case w/ 300W (mATX) $99.99
- Antec NSK4480 Mini-Tower w/ 380W (mATX) $84.99
- Antec Sonata III Piano Black w/ 500W (ATX) $134.99
- Antec Sonata Designer 500 White w/ 500W (ATX) $159.99
- Antec P182B Black Tower Case (ATX) $144.99
- Antec P182SE Black Tower Case (ATX) $144.99
- Antec Nine Hundred Black Tower (ATX) Black $119.99
- Chenbro PC61189 Mid Tower Case (ATX) Beige/Black $74.99
- Chenbro PC61319 Mid Tower Case (ATX) Black $44.99
- Enlight Mid Tower Case w/ 7 Bays (ATX) Beige/Black ..... $49.99/$49.99
- Thermaltake Swing VB6000BWS Black ATX Case $84.99
- Thermaltake Soprano VB1000BWS Black ATX Case $89.99
- Thermaltake Element VC6000BWS Silver ATX Desktop Case $154.99
- Thermaltake Tsunami Dream VA3000BWA Black ATX Case $129.99
- Thermaltake Tsunami Dream VA3000SWA Silver ATX Case $134.99
- Thermaltake Thermaltake Circle Silver ATX Case $139.99
- Thermaltake Armor Jr. VC3000BWS Black ATX Case $119.99
- Thermaltake Armor Jr. VC3000SWA Aluminum ATX Case $139.99
- Thermaltake Armor VA8000BWS Black ATX Case $159.99
- Thermaltake Shark VA7000SWA Silver ATX Case $174.99
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- LianLi PC-60B Plus II Aluminum Case (ATX) Black $164.99

250W - 600W Power Supplies Available Online

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- Antec Quattro 1000W True Power Power Supply $199.99
- BFG PC System 800W Power Supply $219.99
- BFG PC System 1000W Power Supply $304.99
- Enlight 350W Power Supply $44.99
- Enlight 450W Power Supply w/ 2 fans $59.99
- Enermax EG505P-VE Power Supply w/ 2 fans (All-In-One) $89.99
- Enermax Galaxy DXX 850W Power Supply $284.99
- Enermax Galaxy DXX 1000W Power Supply $359.99
- Enermax Infinity 720W Power Supply $199.99
- Enermax Liberty 400W Power Supply (Modular Connectors) $84.99
- Enermax Liberty 500W Power Supply (Modular Connectors) $119.99
- Enermax Liberty 620W Power Supply (Modular Connectors) $144.99
- Raptor ISO-500 450W Power Supply w/ 2 fans $49.99
- OCZ 600W GameXStream SLI Power Supply w/ 2 fans $114.99
- OCZ 700W GameXStream SLI Power Supply w/ 2 fans $139.99
- OCZ 850W GameXStream SLI Power Supply w/ 2 fans $164.99
- Seasonic S12-550 550W ATX12V v2.0 Power Supply $124.99
- Seasonic S12-650 650W ATX12V v2.0 Power Supply $159.99

Premier Barebone Systems

- Shuttle SG33G5V1 (Socket 775) w/ G33 Chipset ..... Q $349.99
- Shuttle SN27P2 (Socket 939) Nvidia nForce 570 Ultra $399.99

More Shuttle Barebone Accessories Available Online

- Shuttle PC23 - Internal 23 in 1 Flash Media Card Reader ..... Q $29.99
- Shuttle PC40 / PC50 - 250W/300W Power Supply for Shuttle ..... $74.

SOHO my AIO

Four hot all-in-ones for your business

Call it a minimalist movement. Rather than investing in separate office equipment such as a printer, scanner, copier and fax machine, one of the latest trends is buying a "multifunction" printer that handles all of these tasks.

Sometimes these inkjet or laser-based printers are aptly referred to as "all-in-one" products. Companies may also incorporate this added functionality into the product name, such as the HP PSC 2510 – the "PSC" stands for print, scan and copy. Similarly, Lexmark often uses the acronym "AIO" for their all-in-one product lines.

"A multi-function printer is a hub of efficiency that saves time, space and money – three crucial elements to a successful business" explains Justin Joseph, spokesperson for Canon's printers. "Imagine the increased productivity when workers aren't racing from a copy center, to a printer, back to a scanner, only to find a separate fax machine to send it off."

The question isn't whether or not your small office or home office needs a multifunction printer, bur rather, which one is for you?

Here we take a look at a few hot models.

A touch of class

Canon's imageCLASS 8180c ($899.99; www.canon.ca) is a colour laser printer for power users who want everything in a centralized location. Key features include a 50-sheet auto-document feeder (and total paper capacity of 375 sheets); colour fax at 33.6 Kbps; wired networking capability; and professional-looking colour copies or prints (2400 x 600 dots per inch resolution) at four pages per minute or 20 pages per minute for black. Scan documents on the flatbed and the bundled OCR (optical character recognition) software will transcribe the images into onscreen text.

Canon imageCLASS 8180c

Wireless, for cheap

Home office workers on a budget might opt for the affordable Lexmark X6570 ($199.99; www.lexmark.ca), which can print, scan, copy and fax – wirelessly – from any computer on the network (via 802.11g technology). Plus, this all-in-one inkjet model offers many extras including two-sided/duplex printing; 25-sheet auto-document feeder for faxing and copying; built-in editing tools (before you create borderless prints); and for added convenience, the ability to print directly from a USB Flash drive, memory card or PictBridge-compatible digital camera.

Photo friendly

At-home workers who also need consumer features might opt for the aggressively-priced Epson Stylus CX7000F ($129.99; www.epson.ca), an all-in-one printer/scanner/copier/fax machine that delivers stunning images thanks to its DURABrite Ultra pigment ink for long-lasting and smudge-free prints. In fact, this Epson model offers individual ink cartridges (so you only replace what you need) and high-speed printing and copying (up to 27 pages/copies per minute for black and colour) be it from computer files, scanned documents or photos or from memory cards. Scanning options include OCR and photo restoration.

Lexmark X6570

Epson Stylus CX7000F

Touching is believing

SOHO workers in search of a middle-of-the-road all-in-one solution – not an entry-level inkjet machine and not a pricey laser model – might consider the new HP Photosmart C8180 ($499.99; www.hp.ca), with its 3.5-inch interactive touchscreen; built-in 802.11g wireless and Bluetooth (so you can print wirelessly from your cell phone, PDA or computer); fast 34 pages per minute printing for black and 33 pages per minute for colour; and built-in DVD burner to archive your photos onto discs (with LightScribe support so you can also print onto the discs themselves!). Advanced six-colour scanning at 9600 dots per inch, a negative and slide adapter and built-in editing options are also ideal extras for photo lovers.

By Marc Saltzman

HP Photosmart C8180

loading high-speed DVD burners on the front of the machine. All components, including an ATX motherboard, are industry standard, allowing for virtually unlimited modifications.

Speaking of which, the Blackbird has a stunningly innovative, tool-less design that makes the process of swapping parts so simple that even a techno-phobe grandmother could tackle it. From graphics cards to hard drives, everything simply snaps into place—no screws to twist out, no cables to plug in. "It's basically like Lego," said Sood, as he demonstrated the installation of a standard, off-the-shelf hard drive, which involved little more than pulling out one of the system's five hard disk trays, dropping the hardware into it, then shoving it back in and snapping up a plastic lock. Sood also mentioned that there would be no need to "mess around" with driver installation, though didn't demonstrate this point.

HP wants to get the message out that the Blackbird is designed to be tampered with by its customers. "You won't void your warranty by opening the case," said McKinney. "We want people to get inside these machines."

He also noted that, unlike the majority of ready-built consumer PCs, Blackbird will not ship with any eyesore stickers advertising interior third-party hardware (think Intel Inside), nor will it have any preloaded junk software. Indeed, much like an exotic sports car, Blackbird will be unblemished and tuned to deliver maximum performance upon delivery.

So, even though the Blackbird is branded by HP (at least on the outside; there's a giant Voodoo DNA logo visible the second you crack open the case), it's essentially a Voodoo dream rig—but one with a surprisingly affordable sticker price. HP will offer several recommended models ranging from $2,500 for a basic build to about $7,000 for a completely pimped out rig. Users can also choose to order a wholly tailored machine.

However, interested parties—we won't just say gamers, since, unexpectedly, only 25 percent of people who buy Voodoo machines use their über powerful computers to play videogames—still have a small wait ahead. While a limited number of Blackbirds were made available this month to a lucky few VIPs, the general public will have to cool its heels until November to place their online-only orders.

By Chad Sapieha

MPT Computers Incorporated

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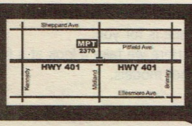

128 CD / DVD wallet with carry handle
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200 CD / DVD case with index & lock
$19

510 CD / DVD case with index & lock
$29

Component to Component
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DVI to DVI
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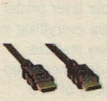
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$35

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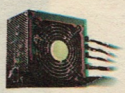
RJ-45 & USB 2.0
$69

ENERMAX Power Supply
NOISETAKER 370W @ $69
NOISETAKER 485W @ $99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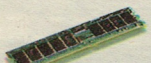
DDR2 / DDR / SD RAM
MEMORY
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Parallel Port PCI Card
Serial Port PCI Card
$CALL

7-Port USB 2.0 Hub with Power
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3-Port USB 2.0 Hub with card reader
$25

USB Print Server
Multi-Protocol
$39

40GB Digital Photo Bank with 12-in-1 card reader high speed USB 2.0
$129

Windows Live Messenger

Camera phones can be used as a scanner, copier or fax machine. There is free downloadable software that lets a cell phone read certain kinds of barcodes and lets the user download product and pricing information. Other available tools let cell phones scan and recognize photographed advertisements, products and logos, then using visual recognition technology, they can provide additional product or related service information.

Company staff members and customers can use digital media to enjoy long-distance, face-to-face meetings for both personal and business purposes. Audio, video and tele-conference technologies can be used to great effect and impact, either in the company's wired boardroom or from an Internet-connected small office desktop PC. Digital videoconferencing products and services combine audio, video and telephony features into a competitive advantage for business communications. Even wireless conferencing is supported nowadays, with several products that can turn a compatible notebook PC into a digital media conferencing facility.

Of course, there are several third-party business communications solutions from which to choose, but of course, the main computer operating system developers also offer conferencing capabilities: Microsoft's Outlook, Live Messenger, Instant Messaging and Groove Meeting Space are among its integrated solutions for business communicators; Apple, with its iSight and iChat AV built into the latest OS X version, also provides integrated communication and video messaging support.

Integrating business communications and digital media does require use and knowledge of some computer-based technology, but it is generally easy to use and inexpensive to buy. There are numerous choices for both hardware and software, in addition to those mentioned above.

Video conversion to and from almost any format, including HD and SD (standard definition) TV, DV, QuickTime, MPEG, H.264, 3GP, Flash, WMV, RealMedia and others is inexpensive and effective nowadays, so your message can be delivered on anything from a widescreen HDTV to a cell phone.

Easy-to-use, wizard-enabled software for PCs and Macs provide the ability to capture audio and video from a digital camcorder or VTR, often with one simple click.

Conversion tools can turn digital video into PowerPoint and Flash formatted files so it can be seamlessly combined with text, graphics, animation and sound.

Selectable distribution options mean that your business messages can be delivered as motion media on the Internet, SOHO networks or corporate intranets; from VTRs, DVDs or CDs; as well as via PowerPoint, PDF, HTML and plain old paper!

Swissbit Swissmemory

But no matter what digital technology you use for business communications, the benefits are often the same: Better customer communications and end-user support. Enhanced marketing and promotion. More effective training and development. Engaging new product launches and announcements. Increased sales.

Podcasts and RSS feeds are great business communication tools, too; flexible, functional, and fairly easy to create. Both can be used on the computer or a portable digital device, and because images, graphics and digital video can be incorporated into a podcast, businesspeople can become mediacasters.

The goal, of course, is to promote your product, build awareness about your company or generally inform the audience about you, your personality and vision. Program content can be distributed to prospective customers via linked email, or it can be made available "on-demand," so that it can be enjoyed at the customer's choice of time and place.

RSS feeds are like customized headline or business news subscription requests, so that a client can opt-in or out of specific business communications as needed. The headlines link back to more complete stories or online media resources. RSS feeds can be highly targeted, sending very specific messages about your business to very specific target groups. Freely available software programs can help you create and maintain an unlimited number of RSS feeds and podcasts, thus letting you maintain and distribute multiple content streams simultaneously.

No matter what line of work you really specialize in, you must communicate with your customers at some point. Digital technology provides a very flexible platform for delivering an effective and engaging message.

By Lee Rickwood

LaCie Mobile Disk

DV or Not DV

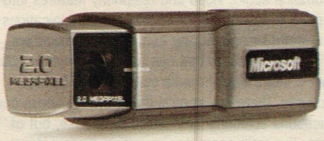
The benefits of digital video in getting your business point across

It's often been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. The question, especially for business people, is: "Which words?"

Defining your company's unique selling points in the marketplace is crucial to continued growth and success. Being able to differentiate your product or service from that of your competitor is a matter of good words – and some good pictures, possibly video, maybe with music, often posted to a website or burned to a DVD.

Palm Treo 680

Microsoft LifeCam NX-6000



Even though watching high definition TV or listening to an iPod is normally a lot of fun, digital media can be much more than entertainment. Putting aside matters of quality for just one moment, we generally consume media for pleasure, not for business.

But consumer products like cell phones, video iPods, PDAs and other media-enabled devices do allow for easy delivery and distribution of a business message; online tools like streaming video, RSS feeds and opt-in e-newsletters can also be very useful business communication tools.

SOHO (small or home office) operations and much larger corporations alike can use digital media techniques and technologies to enhance business communications, increase client awareness and build revenue.

Digital video, for example, can be used to deliver a message over and over again, with consistency and dependability. Video has great emotional impact, and so can be used to build meaningful relationships with the customer. Video can also be used to present detailed information and step-by-step instruction, and so is a tremendous tool for product demonstration and service support.

Portable digital media players that combine a liquid crystal display (LCD) and a miniature storage device (be it hard drive, memory card or optical disk) make carrying a screen just as easy as carrying the content.

Many traveling salespeople or corporate road warriors are taking iPod remote docking stations with them. The iPod is nice, but photos, videos and music can be presented with much greater effect on larger screens and bigger stereos using a docking station's simple cable connections to an office TV or a home theatre system.

Portable media players, on the market at different sizes and prices, combine the audio/video/photo playback portability of the video iPod with memory card compatibility, a voice recorder and USB connectivity to an internal hard drive. They will have a useful, but somewhat small LCD screen. Most can be connected to a TV or stereo system, but some also come with an incorporated audio speaker, which is very handy for desktop presentations to small groups of clients or co-workers.

Perhaps digital media players are not seen as critical components of business operation, but how about the phone? There are not many companies that do not have mobile telephony capabilities, and that means there's not many companies without video capability.

Cell phones, as we all know, have been imbued with any number of additional capabilities and functions beyond simply sharing the spoken word. Photo-taking and video-making, in particular, have turned the phone into the Swiss Army Knife of the media world.

So phones are morphing into cameras, but they are also adding other business functions, such as the ability to capture metadata from objects all around us.

Kensington Stereo Dock for iPod

www.aten.com

ATEN Video Solutions

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Game On!(line)

HUB: TCP's top five cures for the office doldrums

If you can deal with the advertising come-ons, wading through a sea of crappy Space Invaders clones and far-reaching, laboured product placements and attempted tie-ins, you may be able to eschew the traditional meaning of "online gaming;" on the web sits a game library that rivals that of even the geekiest game collector.

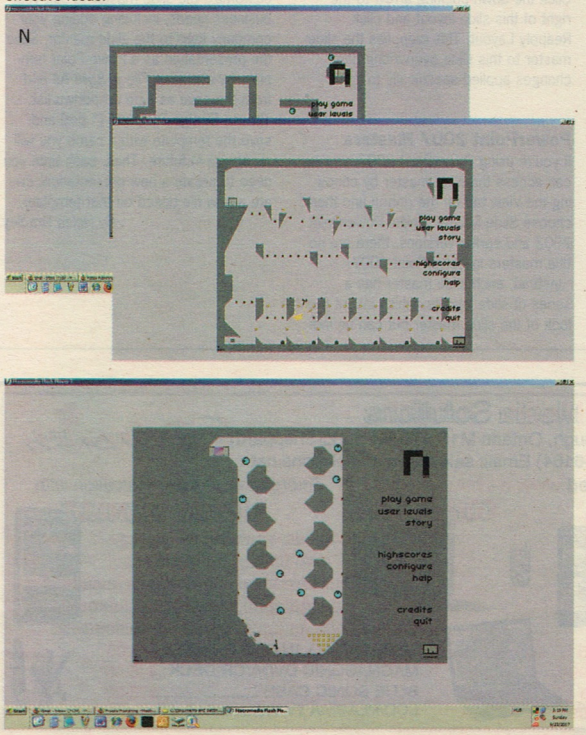
What makes free online games great is that generally speaking, they're created by people with a passion for gaming. Flash games have become something of a proving ground for independent game developers like Canadian Metanet Software. This studio, with funding from Telefilms Canada, is working on a port and redesign of the hugely popular game N, a physics-bending, platform gaming throwback. N+ is soon to be launched on Xbox Live Arcade and there has been talk of PSP and Nintendo DS versions too.

For our roundup of free games, we're focusing on online-only and downloadable games with no installation required (assuming you have Adobe Flash installed, which is a pretty safe bet). This list hardly scratches the surface of what's available and is far from a comprehensive. Rather, it's some of the games we've found ourselves going back to time and time again on lunch hours, after work and in that all too rare and precious office downtime.

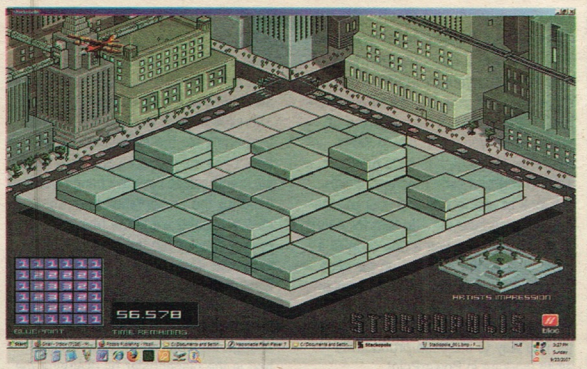
N

Developer: Metanet Software
Official site: www.harveycartel.org/metanet/downloads.html
Most akin to: Lode Runner meets hyper-realistic physics platforming... with a ninja
Time sink: Extreme
TCP rating: ★★★★½

Flash-based games really don't get much better than this; N is a high water mark for aspiring developers and proof positive of the fact that, while indy developers might not get quite the attention they deserve in the days of 100 person development teams and multi-million dollar budgets, the industry is still hungry for fresh and effective ideas.



Stackopolis



Decompiled online versions of the game have been made available at Ebaum's World and AddictingGames and while they don't reflect the most current version of the game and often, don't give credit to its creators, they often serve as a first touch point for players.

N was released in March 2004 and took on a life of its own thanks in large part to a grassroots community that has assembled itself around the included level editor and high score boards, a fact that hasn't gone unnoticed by the commercial games industry. Created by Toronto, ON based developer Metanet Software Inc., the game recently received funding for a new version from Telefilms Canada. N+ is destined for the Xbox Live Arcade section as a download on Xbox 360 and will feature a level editor and the ability to upload and download user created levels; part of what solidified the original N community. Nintendo DS and PSP versions are apparently also in the works.

Stackopolis

Developer: Bloc
Official site: www.stackopolis.com
Most akin to: Tetris and Klax with a dash of early SimCity
Time sink: 2+ hours
TCP rating: ★★★★

Think about an amalgamation of Tetris, Klax and SimCity with a much larger focus on the former and you have a pretty good idea what Stackopolis is all about. It's one of those "moment to learn, lifetime to master" types. Levels consist of a seemingly random smattering of square sidewalk sections dropped on a square board. Using a blueprint in the bottom left of the screen, players have to rearrange the tiles by clicking to select and clicking again to drop. A city plan may call for a one tile foundation across the board stepped to two tiles one row in with a raised three tile section in the middle, for example.

This is an act fast, think faster sort of game; a timer is steadily counting down the seconds to your complete failure as a city planner and it doesn't afford much room for mistakes.

Line Rider (Beta 2)

Developer: Bostjan Cadez
Official site: www.official-linerider.com
Most akin to: Horrace goes Skiing meets MS Paint
Time sink: A few minutes up to several hours
TCP rating: ★★★½

Not a game in the traditional sense, Line Rider sees players drawing out elaborate Mouse Trap like scenarios for a hapless little man in a red scarf to test out. The game took on a life of its own and some of the more elaborate scenarios users have created are available for viewing online through video services (type "line rider" in the YouTube search engine for a look at some of the more in-depth experiments). There's also a large collection of videos hosted on the official site.

It's a love it or couldn't-care-less-about-it proposition; while it's interesting to see what other people have spent time creating in the form of elaborate runs and fan

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Mastering PowerPoint masters

If you feel that it takes far too much time to format your PowerPoint slides, there are tools you can use to automate this process. PowerPoint, in place of styles which you might use in Word, Publisher or Excel, has slide masters. The PowerPoint slide master controls the look of all the slides in your presentation. To change the title font for each slide, instead of doing it one slide at a time, change the title font on the slide master and all the slides in the presentation will change accordingly. Getting to know and understand the slide master is a way to increase productivity when working in PowerPoint.

Masters in PowerPoint 2003

To find the slide master in PowerPoint 2003 and earlier versions, choose View > Master > Slide Master. There is a slide master for the current presentation and, perhaps, also a title master, although this is not always the case. The slide master displays the current formatting for the slides in the presentation. Click the title area and then right click and select Font to change the font used for the presentation title. Right click a bullet point in the text placeholder and change the bullet used for that particular item. You can do this for each level of bullet as desired.

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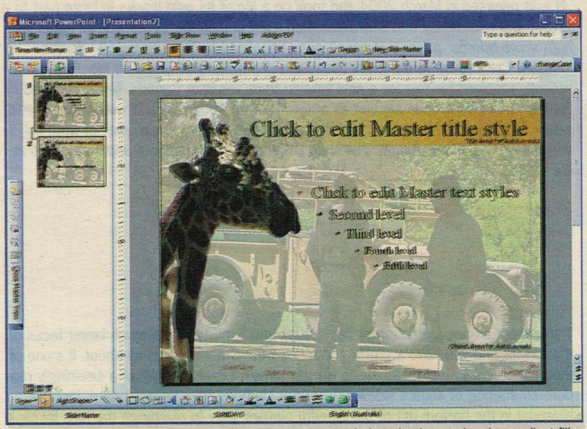

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If a slide does not change to show the newly altered slide master features, chances are that this presentation slide has been altered manually in the past. To apply the changed slide master to this slide, select the slide in the Slides panel, right click and choose Slide Layout. The currently applied slide layout will be selected in the slide layout task pane on the right of the window. Click the down pointing arrow to the right of this slide layout and click Reapply Layout. This reapplies the slide master to this slide overwriting any changes applied specifically to it.

PowerPoint 2007 Masters

If you're using PowerPoint 2007, you can access the slide master by choosing the View tab on the ribbon and then choose Slide Master. Unlike PowerPoint 2003 and earlier versions, there are no title masters in PowerPoint 2007.

Instead, each slide master has a series of slide layouts, which inherit the look of the slide master but can be individually edited if required. The basics of slide masters are, however, the same in both versions in that the slide master affects the look and formatting of every slide in a PowerPoint 2007 presentation.

You can have multiple slide masters in any version of PowerPoint. To create a second slide master, right click the current slide master and choose Insert Slide Master. This second slide master can be formatted differently to the first. For example, in PowerPoint 2007 you can apply a different theme to it.

PowerPoint has an unfortunate habit of deleting any slide master not in use for at least one slide in the presentation. To protect your slide masters from being deleted, right click each slide master in your presentation and choose Preserve Master. This prevents it from deletion even if no slides use it.

If you have a specific look you need or want to use for all your PowerPoint presentations, the slide master is the key to creating it efficiently and effectively. Create a new blank presentation and customize the slide master to suit your business needs, including adding your company logo to the slide master. Save the presentation as a PowerPoint template by choosing File > Save As and from the save as type dropdown list, choose Design Template (*.pot) and save the template with a name you will recognize in future. Then, each time you need to create a new presentation, create a new file based on that template.

By Helen Bradley

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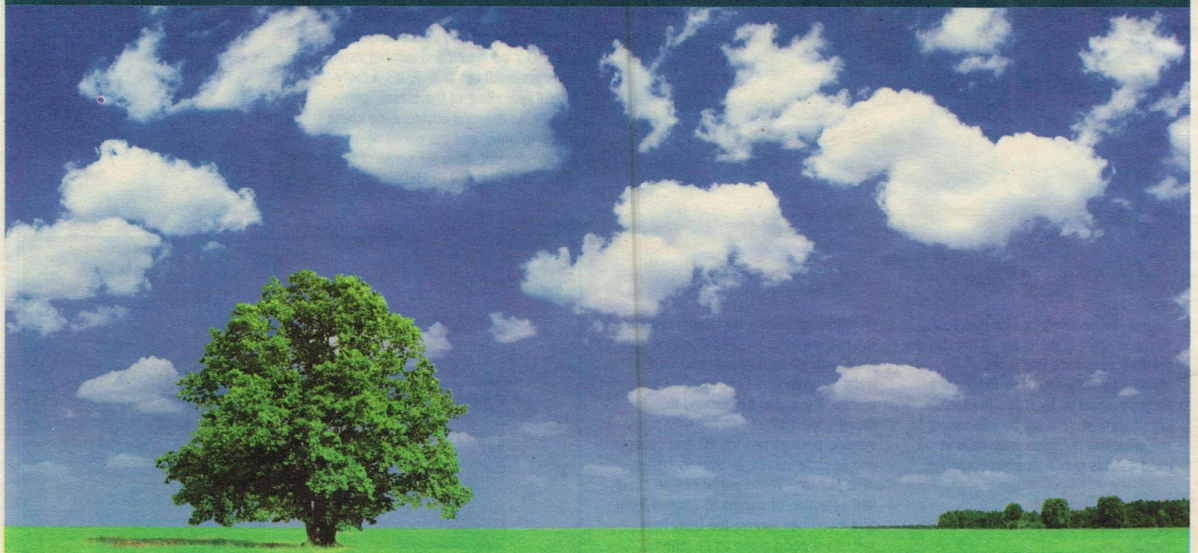

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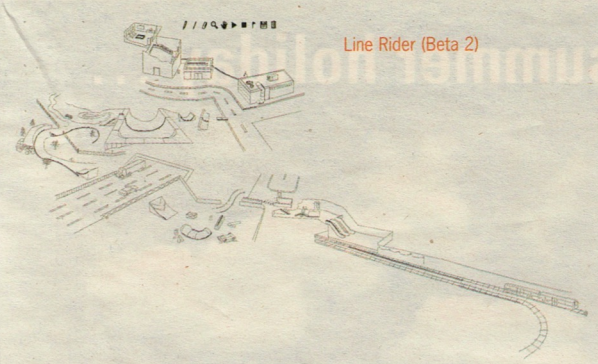


Line Rider (Beta 2)

videos, it's certainly not for everyone. Trial and error is the order of the day in creating scenarios that work.

Publishing rights for Line Rider were recently acquired by California's inXile Entertainment so it will be interesting to see what the publisher may have in mind for this mini online phenomenon.

Oreo 3D Billiards

Developer: Skyworld Technologies Inc.
Official site: http://www.nabiscoworld.com/games
Most akin to: Uhh, billiards
Time sink: Several coffee breaks over several weeks
TCP rating: ★★★★

An unfortunately rare example of marketing effort games done right. This is a solid pool game with some reasonably advanced 3D graphics and a fun factor that's off the hook. The only thing missing that would make this a real, full-fledged barroom pool sim is the ability to add proper backspin.

Players can select from two different tables, both emblazoned with the Oreo treatment of course. Players choose from classic pool, eight- or nine-ball against another player (at the same computer) or against the computer itself. The pool halls you'll be playing in seem to have patrons and owners with an unnatural affinity for Oreos; around the bar are bags of Oreo cookies, complete with glasses of milk and on the walls hang various Oreo-inspired art pieces. If you can get around that though, the game is on par with many generic pool games for PC and console and in some cases, is actually better.

The Nabisco World portal has an excellent selection of games to choose from and if you can forgive the fairly hard sell, it's a good place to go when you've got an hour to kill.

SimCity Classic Live

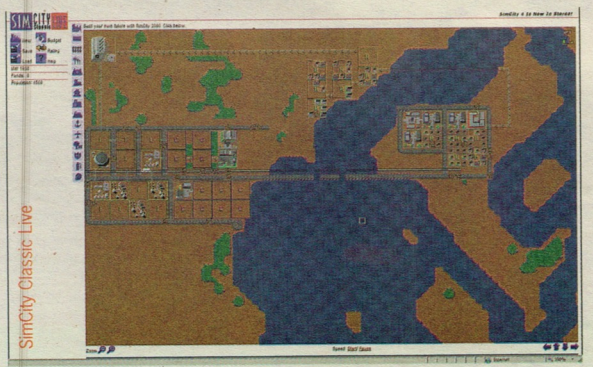
Developer: Maxis
Official site: simcity.ea.com/play/simcity_classic.php (registration required)
Most akin to: The original SimCity
Time sink: Immense
TCP rating: ★★★★★

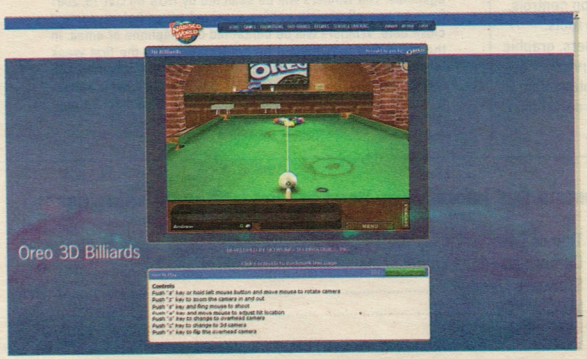
Any gamer who's been around computers since the days of the Atari ST, "classic" Mac OS, the Commodore 64 and Amiga has likely dedicated a good number of hours to building virtual cities in Will Wright's classic. You probably remember trying to resist the temptation to type out "F-U-N-D-S" when faced with angry Sim citizens who seem to want high-level services with low-level tax rates.

Another marketing effort gone right, SimCity Classic Live allows you to play at the office over lunch or on coffee break and save out your progress to a file which you can keep on a USB key to keep playing at home. The game doesn't seem to work in Firefox (tested with v. 2.0.0.7 both with and without extensions enabled) but in IE 7, it's a fairly faithful reworking of the classic game. There's no mayoral advisers, no cheat codes to enter and the pared down control set doesn't allow for some of the in-depth tweaking that made SimCity.

Also, disasters happen entirely too frequently. However, it's still a whole lot of fun and well worth checking out.

By Andrew Moore-Crispin





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Subaru Canada Inc.	560 Suffolk Court	Mississauga	ON	L5R 4J7	www.subaru.ca
Targus Canada	90 Admiral Blvd.	Mississauga	ON	L5T 2W1	www.targus.com/ca/
Tomcom Link Corp	1353 Britannia Road East	Mississauga	ON	L4W 1C7	www.tomcom.ca/
CICC Computer	2555 Victoria Park Drive, Unit 3A	Scarborough	ON	M1T 1A3	www.cicc-computer.com/
Computers 4 Less	3595 St. Clair Ave East	Scarborough	ON	M1K 1L8	www.computersforless.com/
MPT/Match Point Technologies	2370 Midland Ave, Unit A-10	Scarborough	ON	M1S 5C6	www.mptcomputers.com
U Computer	4002 Sheppard Ave East, unit 108	Scarborough	ON	M1S 1S6	www.ucomputer.ca/
AEI Internet Inc.	33 Bloor Street East, Suite #1605	Toronto	ON	M4W 3H1	www.aei.com
Fujitech	180 Steeles Ave. W, Unit 2A.	Thornhill	ON	L4J 2L1	
Bell	502 King St West	Toronto	ON	M5V 1L7	www.bell.ca/home/
C.J. Laptop Depot Inc.	321 College Street	Toronto	ON	M5T 1S2	www.cjcomputers.com
erroIOZ	25 St. Mary St., Apt 1804	Toronto	ON	M4Y 1R2	
Incredible Electronics	45 Esandar Drive, Unit # 3	Toronto	ON	M4G 4C5	
Netfirms, Inc.	5160 Yonge Street, Suite 1800	Toronto	ON	M2N 6L9	www.netfirms.ca/hub
Omni Systems Int'l	70 Yorkville Ave., Unit A-1	Toronto	ON	M5R 1B9	www.laptopcloseout.com
Overseas Video Lab	1359 Wilson Ave	Toronto	ON	M3M 1H7	www.overseasvideolab.com
PC COM (Gang Xiong)	2788 Bathurst Street	Toronto	ON	M6B 3A3	http://www.pccom.ca/
Sonnam Computer Network	457 Spadina Ave	Toronto	ON	M5S 2G7	www.sonnam.com
Subaru Canada Inc.	67 Richmond St. W, 2nd Floor	Toronto	ON		http://www.subaru.ca/
Toronto Hydro Telecom	10 Belfield Road	Toronto	ON	M9W 1G1	http://www.thtelecom.ca/
Winnet Systems	1200 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 100	Toronto	ON	M3C 1H9	http://www.winnet.ca/

Internet Service Provider Locater

Name	Phone	URL	Email	CABLE ($)	DIAL UP ($)	DSL ($)	DRY DSL ($)	ISDN ($)	POINT-POINT	SATELLITE	WIRELESS ($)	ANTI-SPAM	WEBSPACE	ALLOW SERVER	USENET	VOIP
1stAccess Internet	877-779-1575	http://www.1staccess.ca	sales@1staccess.ca	✗	✗	24.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
295.ca	416-848-4295	http://www.295.ca	mb@295.ca	✗	2.95	19.95	39.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
3z Canada	888-822-6232	http://www.3z.ca	sales@3z.ca	✗	20	40	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Advance Network Services Corp.	613-834-6154	http://www.advnet.ca	sales@advnet.ca	✗	15.99	29.95	8	✗	✗	54.99	29.95	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
AEI Internet	877-305-4155	http://www.aei.ca	info@aei.ca	✗	4.95	29.95	39.95	195	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Airnet Wireless Inc.	905-349-2084	http://www.airnet.ca	airnet.info@airnet.ca	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	55	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
All Canadian Dialup	877-236-3425	http://www.zeuter.com	sales@zeuter.com	✗	0.01	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Altima.Net INTERNET	866-990-6140	http://global.ca	admin@altima.net	26.95	9.95	24.95	29.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
AOL Canada Inc.	800-274-2790	http://aol.ca	IMAdSales@aol.com	✗	11.95	44.95	7	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Apexia Voice and Data Inc.	705-721-5600	http://www.apexia.ca	info@apexia.ca	✗	10	25	25	✗	66	✗	40	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
ASERTY Enhanced Internet Services	866-746-6515	http://www.aserty.com/	service@aserty.com	✗	5.5	33.95	43.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
auracom/Interhop	877-688-8127	http://www.auracom.net	sales@auracom.com	24.95	11.95	24.95	7	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
AxcessNet	514-630-9701	http://www.axcessnet.net/web/	info@axcessnet.net	✗	9.95	24.95	34.95	✗	✗	✗	129.95	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
B2B2C High Speed Internet	800-965-9065	http://www.b2b2c.ca	sales@b2b2c.ca	34.95	8.95	9.95	18.9	✗	✗	✗	199	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BasicISP.net	800-456-3118	http://www.BasicISP.net	Support@BasicISP.net	✗	6.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Bell Sympatico	800-773-2121	http://bell.ca	www.bell.ca	✗	11.95	24.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Broadband Ontario Incorporated	866-870-0763	http://www.broadbandontario.com	sales@broad bandontario.com	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	69.99	49.95	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
Cable Cable Inc	866-887-6434	http://www.myrooftop.net	lonny@cablecable.net	39.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	39.95	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
CanDSL	613-321-7873	http://www.simplysurf.net	sales@simplysurf.net	✗	✗	32.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Canquest Communications (Online) Inc	519-351-8647	http://www.gocanquest.com	sales@canquest.com	✗	10	7	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Caylix Internet Solutions	604-792-6563	http://www.caylix.com	info@caylix.com	✗	17.95	41.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	49.95	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Citenet Telecom Inc.	514-861-5050	http://www.citenet.net	sales@citenet.net	29.95	10	25.95	33.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Citenet Telecom Inc.	514-861-5050	http://www.citenet.net	sales@citenet.net	29.95	10	25.95	33.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Club Plus Internet	514-990-6753	http://www.clubplus.net	info@clubplus.net	✗	7.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colba.Net	514-856-3500	http://www.colba.net	ellen.chalyyuk@colba.net	✗	9.95	28.95	✗	89.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Colosseum Online Inc.	416-739-7873	http://www.colosseum.com/	info@colosseum.com	✗	15.99	28.85	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Compton Communications	905-985-8171	http://www.compton.net	customerservice@compton.net	27.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Compu-SOLVE Internet Services	877-567-6594	http://www.csolve.net	sales@csolve.net	✗	9.95	19.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	89.95	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Copper.net	888-336-3318	http://www.mycopper.net/	support@copper.net	✗	9.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Cybernet Communications Inc	416-410-2180	http://www.mycybernet.net/	Toll Free 1-877-292.7638	✗	8.95	27.95	27.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
DataStore	519-793-4050	http://www.the-matrix.ca	sales@the-matrix.ca	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	59.95	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
DialTrax	434-836-4030	http://www.dialtrax.net	sales@dialtrax.net	✗	12.95	✗	✗	19.95	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
DMTS	807-223-1100	http://www.drytel.net	general@dryden.ca	✗	18.95	21.95	✗	✗	✗	199.95	44.95	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Dr. Logicks Internet Services	705-726-4063	http://www.drlogick.com	drlogick@drlogick.com	✗	19	✗	✗	49	✗	✗	29.95	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Eagle.ca	905-373-9313	http://www.eagle.ca	sales@eagle.ca	✗	29.99	44.99	✗	✗	185	✗	185	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

Data courtesy CanadianISP.com. For head-to-head comparison and the most recent ISP information, visit www.CanadianISP.com.

While we strive to bring you the most accurate and up-to-date information, please contact ISPs to confirm details.

Tech Training in Ontario

Name	Phone	Address	City	Website
Database Information	416-438-7393	1027 Markham Rd	Scarborough	
Humber College	416-675-3111	205 Humber College Blvd	Etobicoke	http://www.humber.ca/
I C Super Computers	519-752-2678	986 Highway 54	Caledonia	http://www.icnme.com/
Ibt College Of Business	416-963-1211	50 St Clair Ave E 400	Toronto	
Industrain College	416-733-8888	81 Sheppard Ave W	North York	
Jarrett'S Small Business Svc	519-658-8230	90 Gunn Ave	Cambridge	
Jim Shaw Accounting Svc	905-878-4659	157 Main St E	Milton	
Learning Enrichment Foundation	416-769-0830	116 Industry St	York	www.lefca.org
Mld Solutions	519-433-2649	1499 Barrymont Ave	London	http://www.mldsolutions.com/
Operitel Corp	705-745-6605	347 Pido Rd 17	Peterborough	http://www.operitel.com/default.aspx
Orillia Learning Ctr	705-325-9279	575 West St S 15	Orillia	
P Frederick Assoc	519-759-5822	72 Gladstone Ave	Brantford	
Pc-Tek Computers	705-737-4613	4 Alliance Blvd 1B	Barrie	http://www.pctekcomputers.com/
Proex Inc	416-502-0804	235 Yorkland Blvd 402	North York	http://www.proex.ca/
Rolling Thunder Online	905-522-2194	772 King St W	Hamilton	http://www.thunder.ca/Thunder-CA/
Rowie Walker & Assoc Inc	416-446-1090	220 Duncan Mill Rd 412	North York	http://www.rowiewalker.com/
Seneca College Of Applied Arts	416-491-5050	1750 Finch Ave E	North York	http://www.senecac.on.ca/cms/
Seniors Online	905-882-6080	51 Rose Green Dr	Thornhill	http://www.seniors.gc.ca/
St Joseph'S Workshop	905-568-8777	259 Traders Blvd E	Mississauga	
Sterling Education Ctr	905-545-6363	Main St & Gage Ave	Hamilton	
Synergy Business College	416-445-7773	40 Wynford Dr	North York	http://www.synergycollege.com/
Teasdale Consultants Ltd	905-508-2252	556 Edward Ave 58	Richmond Hill	http://www.teasdaleconsultants.com/
Technokids-Technoplus	705-722-6550	75 Cedar Pointe Dr 907	Barrie	http://www.technokids-technoplus.gr/
Top Gear Web Design & Dev	705-812-0917	80 Bradford St	Barrie	
Tri Arch Educational Svc	905-665-9637	1121 Dundas St E	Whitby	http://www.triarch.ca/main.php
Tri Os College Of Information	905-528-8972	4 Hughson St S 500	Hamilton	http://www.trios.com/
York College	416-861-1808	519 Jarvis St	Toronto	http://www.ycp.edu/

Internet Service Provider Locater

Name	Phone	URL	Email	CABLE ($)	DIAL UP ($)	DSL ($)	DRY DSL ($)	ISDN ($)	POINT-POINT	SATELLITE	WIRELESS ($)	ANTI-SPAM	WEBSPACE	ALLOW SERVER	USENET	VOIP
Odynet Inc	877-679-8883	http://www.ody.ca	info@ody.ca	✗	10	24.95	24.95	99	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Ontario Dsl	877-722-2453	http://www.ontariodsl.ca	info@ontariodsl.ca	✗	13.5	22.99	26.99	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ontario Web	866-209-0349	http://www.ontarioweb.ca	sales@ontarioweb.ca	✗	✗	34.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Oricom Internet Inc	866-967-4266	http://www.oricom.ca	info@oricom.ca	24.95	9.95	24.95	✗	29.95	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Packet Works	519-579-4507	http://www.packetworks.net	sales@packetworks.net	✗	29.95	39.95	44.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Phreego, LLC	517-420-7363	http://www.phreego.com	helpdesk@phreego.com	✗	9.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
porchlight.ca	866-767-2454	http://www.porchlight.ca	support@porchlight.ca	✗	9.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
PrimeLite Communications	416-665-3320	http://www.primelite.com	sales@primelite.com	✗	9.95	25.95	40.95	189.95	✗	✗	139	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Primus Canada	877-704-4269	http://www.primustel.ca	customer.care@primustel.ca	✗	9.95	19.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
PureSpeed.ca	866-777-1633	http://purespeed.ca	sales@purespeed.ca	✗	14.99	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Radnet Internet Solutions	519-687-6381	http://www.radnet.ca	info@radnet.ca	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	24.95	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
RiverLink	613-936-2505	http://www.riverlink.ca	email@riverlink.ca	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	54.95	64.95	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Rogers	1888-764-3771	http://www.rogers.com	http://www.rogers.com	22.95	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	25.95	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Rogers Business Solutions	416-935-4647	http://www.rogers.com/rbs	rmasotti@rci.rogers.com	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Ruralwave	705-357-2848	www.ruralwave.biz	service@ruralwave.biz	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	99.99	✗	39.99	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
Sentex Data Communications	888-473-6839	http://www.sentex.ca	sales@sentex.ca	✗	19.95	26.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
shaw.webworx.ca	403-730-2040	http://shaw.webworx.ca	info@webworx.ca	24.95	24.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
SimplySurf.net	613-321-7873	http://www.simplysurf.net	sales@simplysurf.net	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	29.95	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
SmokeSignal	866-517-6390	http://www.smokesignal.net	mason@smokesignal.net	✗	19.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Start Communications	519-434-5888	http://www.start.ca/	sales@start.ca	✗	9.95	24.95	34.95	✗	✗	✗	39.95	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
SureNet Communications	866-700-1977	http://www.surenet.net	sales@surenet.net	44.95	22.95	39.99	✗	✗	✗	✗	39.99	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
SwitchWorks Technologies Inc.	416-531-8750	http://www.whip.ca	rross@whip.ca	✗	✗	49.95	59.95	✗	✗	✗	95.95	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Sysmarc Inc	905-642-6950	http://www.sysmarc.ca	sales@sysmarc.net	✗	14.99	29.99	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Tamco Technologies of Canada Ltd.	416-222-6018	http://www.tamcotec.com	info@tamcotec.com	✗	12	35	45	20	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TekSavvy Solutions Inc.	877-779-1575	http://www.teksavvy.com	sales@teksavvy.com	✗	7.99	24.95	37.2	✗	1500	✗	29.99	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TOAST.net Internet Service	888-862-7863	http://www.toast.net	sales@toast.net	✗	9.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Velcom	866-983-5266	http://www.velcom.ca	sales@velcom.ca	✗	7.95	24.95	37	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Vianet Internet Solutions	800-788-0363	http://www.vianet.ca	sales@vianet.ca	29.99	9.95	29.99	✗	✗	✗	✗	49.95	✓	✓	✓	✓	12.5
VIF Internet	1-888-321-3737	http://www.vif.com/	info@vif.com	19.95	9.95	26.95	+9.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	9.95
Wave II Networks Ltd	905-632-4018	http://www.waveii.com	info@waveii.com	✗	✗	45	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Wireless Ontario	866-870-0763	http://www.wirelessontario.com	sales@broadbandontario.com	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	50	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Zeuter Development Corporation	705-746-4625	http://www.zeuter.com	sales@zeuter.com	✗	0.01	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ZiD.Com	877-659-6505	http://www.zid.com	sales@zid.com	✗	8.95	29.95	10	19.99	✗	✗	49.95	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Zing Networks Inc.	905-833-2152	http://www.zing-net.ca	support@zing-net.ca	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	49.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

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EFSnet	877-465-2648	http://www.efsnet.ca	info@efsnet.ca	✗	8.95	29.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
E-Gate Communications Inc.	416-447-7700	http://www.egate.net	sales@egate.net	✗	15	45	✗	15	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Electronicbox	514-282-6933	http://www.electronicbox.net	sales@electronicbox.net	39.95	✗	34.95	6.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Execulink	877-393-2854	http://www.execulink.com	mailbox@execulink.com	24.95	17.95	31.95	10	✗	✗	✗	49.95	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Global Telecom (Canada) Inc.	800-506-8166	http://www.globaltelecom.ca	sales@globaltelecom.ca	✗	10	34.95	45.95	✗	1200	99	300	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hamilton CommunityNet	905-528-4936	http://www.hwcn.org/	members@hwcn.org	✗	7.35	31.75	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
High Speed FX Communications	519-334-3600	http://www.highspeedfx.com	info@highspeedfx.net	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	49.99	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
HotLinc.com	281-642-4028	http://www.hotlinc.com	info@hotlinc.com	✗	14.95	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
ICA Wireless	905-624-8566	http://www.icawireless.com	sales@ica.net	✗	14.95	24.99	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
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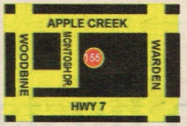

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Toronto hosts trio of professional videogame tournaments

Playing for keeps at the World Cyber Games in Toronto

Fan Expo 2007, an annual conference put on at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and descended upon by about 50,000 impassioned (read: costumed) geeks interested in everything from comic books and anime to science fiction and horror movies, received an extra dose of nerdiness this year as it played host to a trio of professional videogame competition organizations.

World Cyber Games held its annual Canadian Championships to determine the country's best players in PC games including StarCraft and Counter Strike, as well as Xbox 360 titles like Gears of War and Dead or Alive 4. More than 150 gamers from across the country paid their own way to come to the tournament, which organizers describe as "the Olympics of videogames."

The winners took home prizes consisting of products donated by the tournament's sponsors and will be treated to a trip to Seattle this month to represent Canada in competition against more than 70 other countries for individual cash prizes as large as $15,000 at the world finals. They will also wave Canada's flag and compete for additional prizes at the Pan-American Championships early next year.

Across the hall was an even larger tournament area home to the World Series of Video Games. The world's best Quake IV and World of Warcraft players battled it out in front of rows of bleachers and beneath the amplified sound of a rapid fire commentator who deftly described the action on screen. Winners pocketed cash prizes of as much as $10,000.

Meanwhile, both amateurs and professionals took to the stage and hammed it up for an amused audience of hundreds of people in the console-based Guitar Hero II competition, which featured a panel of judges who evaluated competitors—one of whom was just seven years old—based on game score and physical performance. Players kicked the air, slid on their knees and ripped open their shirts. One gutsy guitarist even took the video out of the game by playing a song blindfolded.

The winner took home nearly $3,000.

Sandwiched between World Cyber Games and the World Series of Games was a pavilion offering information about Major League Gaming, a U.S. based organization that will host its first major event in Canada at the beginning of November in Toronto.

Best known for its televised Halo 2 competitions, Major League Gaming's big league sponsors contribute millions of dollars in financing to the organization—enough for more than a dozen of its contracted league competitors to make a comfortable living playing in monthly tournaments. Revenge of the Nerds, indeed.

By Chad Sapieha

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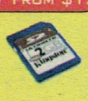

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